

THOUGHTS
ABOUT ART.

PHILIP GILBERT HAMERTON.

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THOUGHTS ABOUT ART.

BY

PHILIP GILBERT HAMERTON,

AUTHOR OF "A PAINTER'S CAMP."

A NEW EDITION, REVISED BY THE AUTHOR.



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TO

WILLIAM WYLD,

CHEVALIER OF THE LEGION OF HONOUR,

MEMBER OF THE ROYAL ACADEMY OF AMSTERDAM.

MY DEAR WYLD,—When the "*Painter's Camp*" and "*Thoughts about Art*" were issued together as one work, the whole was dedicated to you. Now that they are distinct books, I renew the dedication in each of them; not regretting that my affection for you personally and admiration for your art should be commemorated in two books instead of one.

Ever yours most faithfully,

P. G. HAMERTON.

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PREFACE TO THE AMERICAN EDITION.

IN 1862, I published a work in two volumes, entitled "A Painter's Camp in the Highlands, and Thoughts about Art." Each of these volumes was, in fact, a distinct work, but they were issued together in order to get an audience for the Essays. My ambition was not to be a writer of travels, but a writer on art, and the "Painter's Camp" was published to float the Essays, as a merchant ship may carry troops. Since then the position aimed at has been won; that is, an audience has been found, and there is no longer any need to keep the books together.

It has not been considered advisable, however, to republish either volume exactly as it was first issued. Every comparatively inexperienced writer has great faults which care and labor can alone remove. My faults eight years ago, whatever they may be now, were needless prolixity and an appearance, which the reader is entreated to believe was *only* an appearance, of egotism and conceit. In a narrative, of which I was myself the hero, some degree of egotism could scarcely have been avoided, and would not have merited cen-

sure; but from simple want of literary craft the pronoun *I* came in so frequently that the book conveyed an impression of self-assertion, which did scant justice to the real feelings of its author. This may happen, as all practised writers are aware, when an author thinks too often of his own qualifications, and introduces such references to his own knowledge as the following: "I have not had much experience in dissection, but so far as my knowledge of anatomy goes I should say that such or such a bone is insufficiently marked." The allusion to self in a phrase of this kind arises from two feelings, neither of which is blameworthy. The critic feels the necessity for information; and, at the same time, having asked himself whether he has information enough to speak on the point, precludes his observation with a disclaimer of his own importance as an authority. And yet, simply because that unfortunate little pronoun *I* occurs twice in the phrase, it conveys an impression of self-assertion, and the confident critic who assumes his own infallibility, and curtly says that the bone is wrong, without troubling either his readers or himself with any reference to his own qualifications for judging the matter, seems more modest because he is less egotistic. An English critic of note, who has studied modesty as an art (his natural organ of modesty being so small as to require cultivation), has pushed the avoidance of egotism so far that he never says "I believe," or "I hope," or "I saw," but "it is believed," "it is hoped," and such a thing "has been observed." The apparent conceit of the "Painter's Camp" was due to ignorance of these precautions, and to a temper which would have disdained them, not from vanity but

from sincerity. I exposed myself also to the attacks of disingenuous critics, by saying things about myself which were capable of easy misrepresentation; as, for example, when I said that I was the truest painter of Highland scenery who had ever rendered it, the statement, as the context showed, bearing reference to topographic truth alone, which is not an artistic merit at all, but a matter of simple choice and will. In that sense the phrase was strictly true; but a critic detached it from the context, and made it out that I considered myself the truest painter of Highland landscape, in a sense which involved artistic qualities of a very high kind, and so it appeared that I was filled with conceit so monstrous as to be scarcely compatible with sanity, and this at a time when I habitually destroyed half my pictures because they did not seem to me good enough to be exhibited. Critics of more genial and kindly temper saw, however, the real cause of defects, which they rather regretted than reproved; and few books so entirely devoid of literary art have enjoyed so much success as the "Painter's Camp."

The fault of prolixity was due to over-anxiety to be understood. In the common intercourse of life, I had always found that to make people understand things was a matter of prodigious difficulty. For instance, it had always been next to impossible to make people understand why I preferred painting in a hut to painting out of doors in the rain, and why I preferred insubmersible life-boats to common open boats. Hence the notion fixed itself in my mind, that explanation could never be clear enough, or minute enough, or repeated often enough, and that if a position had to be defended

it was impossible to get together too strong a force of authorities. I did not understand then what Scarlett, the advocate, understood so well when he said that if he had five or six good reasons he only gave one to the jury—his best. Readers are divisible into two distinct classes: those who are capable of comprehending an author, and those who are not. The first class enter into your thought at once, but the second never enter into it, and all explanation is thrown away upon them. I have learned this at last, and now write accordingly; but when the "Painter's Camp" first came out, I was in a condition of much bewilderment about my audience, not knowing either whom I was addressing, or when I had said enough.

The result of these natural advances in literary experience has been a revision of the whole book; but as patches of new cloth do not look well on old clothes, and as an author produces quite a different kind of fabric at the end of eight years, nothing has been altered except by erasure. The bits of unnecessary egotism, the long explanations, the tiresome repetitions, have been carefully suppressed; but what remains, remains in the old words. New essays have been added, so that the book might represent the author fairly.

In the epilogue to "A Painter's Camp," allusion was made to an essay which is here given in an abridged form—that entitled "The Painter in his Relation to Society." It gave some offence in England because it rebuked what Ruskin calls "the excessively vulgar and excessively shallow English idea that the profession of an artist is not, and cannot be, a liberal one." All that I regret about it is, that it was not stronger

in its antagonism, and more cunning. The contempt for artists is one of the forms of Philistinism, or resistance to culture. I dare say you may have in America something resembling our British Philistinism, though you can scarcely have any thing so abominable, because you have not got the genuine British stolidity in your temperament. But it is a fact, that in England a very considerable majority in the upper classes have settled it amongst them that art is not a fit profession for a gentleman, and this great decision of society does not seem good and acceptable to the small intellectual class, who are constantly calling it in question. They tell me now (I have lived in France for the last six years) that artists are very much petted in England at present, by way of compensation for the old contempt. They used to be Pariahs, and now they are pets; but artists ought neither to be Pariahs nor pets, and, of the two, the condition of the Pariah is preferable. The one thing which artists want, and which they have never yet been able to get, is equality. They want to be treated seriously, as men occupied in a great pursuit, and whether they fail or succeed as individuals, the greatness of the pursuit should ensure this seriousness of consideration. What makes the position of an artist disagreeable, outside of small and exceptionally intelligent circles in capital cities, is, that he is *not* taken seriously, and has to bear either contempt or compliments. I know an excellent artist in Paris, who is always exasperated when a noble friend of his meets him in society, for the noble friend invariably offers his salutation thus: "Bonjour, Monsieur, et faites vous toujours de jolies choses?" and the detestable phrase is

accompanied by a detestable grin. In the same taste a gentleman used to salute a violinist of his acquaintance with a pantomimic imitation of fiddling, and the question "whether he had been doing any thing of that kind lately?" accompanied, like the Frenchman's question, by a grin. If people could only realize the kind of labor and aspiration in which artists who *are* artists have continually to live, they would at least take them seriously. If it is settled that men lose caste by painting, let it be settled; but then let painters enjoy the sort of consideration which is given to carpenters and blacksmiths, and which is due to working men in every laborious trade. People who scold their contemporaries need not hope to be either liked for it or paid for it, and when I opened this matter in England, I knew that it was enough to sink my book; but it seemed that some good might be done, and I determined to attempt it. Since then it has become clear to me, that since all persons who understand art give artists the sort of consideration which they deserve, the best way to obtain this consideration for artists is not so much to ask for it directly as to endeavor, in a general way, to spread sound ideas about art.

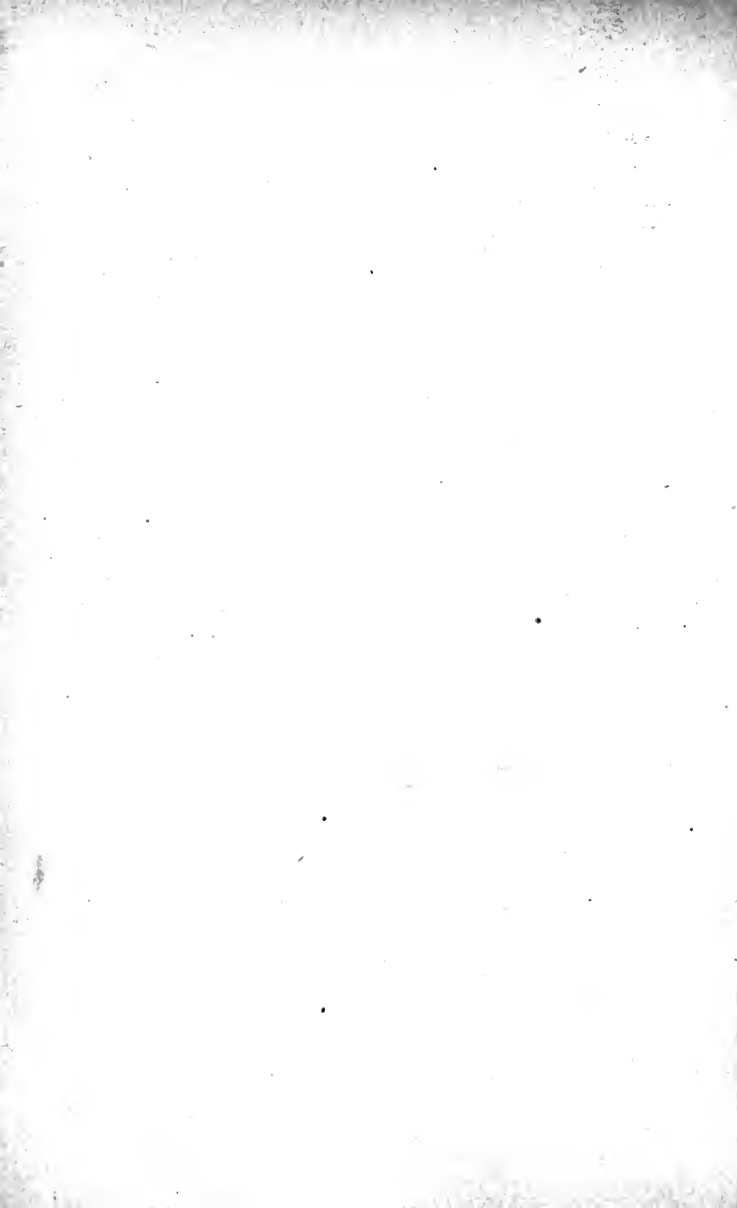
One of my English critics has blamed me for want of faith in art, because I admit that its power is very limited. All spiritual power is limited in reality to those who receive it willingly; if it ever seems to exercise any other action, it intrudes on the domain of temporal power. For instance, when Lacordaire preached in Notre Dame he was exercising the spiritual power; but when the Church of Rome enforced her authority by punishing heretics, she resorted to temporal means, and

was so far a temporal power. Now, painting is purely a spiritual power, and it influences only those who are willing to be influenced. A power of this kind is great or small in proportion to the numbers of its willing adherents, and the numbers of persons who are in any appreciable way influenced by painting are not great in proportion to population. The fact that adherents are willing does not prove weakness, but the fact that none but willing adherents obey the call, *when few are willing*, places every spiritual power at a disadvantage in comparison with the temporal powers, because these last, with the strength given to them by the adhesion of some, compel the adhesion of others. But I should be sorry if any reader supposed that I under-estimated the power which art *does* possess. Art has a kind of influence which it would take pages to define, but which, if a man wields it, places him amongst the spiritual powers. A painter has no lordship over the liberty of men; he cannot govern them in the temporal way, but he has access to very deep and subtle feelings in the few who understand him and receive his ideas, and through these feelings he exercises lordship of another kind. It is the old duality of priest and baron. The baron of these days is not always a soldier, he may be a manufacturer; and the priest of these days is not always a clergyman; he may be a writer, or even a painter. But the broad distinction remains, and all who govern by force or money are of the temporal power; all who influence by persuasion, by intellect, by sympathy, are of the spiritual power. What is lamentable is, that since the two are equally necessary to civilization, there should be any jealousy between them,

or contempt one of the other. I have a friend who is a great manufacturer, and he wrongly fancies that I rather despise him because he has not had time to get culture, and cannot write and talk elegantly and persuasively. But that is a mistake of his. I respect in him a strong temporal lordship, wisely administered, and if he rather despised me because I have not made a fortune, that would be another mistake, because the accumulation of material values is his business, not mine; my business is culture. He and I, that is, his class and my class, are alike indispensable, and instead of undervaluing and being jealous of each other, we should do well to live in mutual consideration and respect.

I cannot let slip this opportunity for thanking American critics for their kind reception of "A Painter's Camp." The tone of their reviews was universally so generous, so entirely free from any disposition to unnecessary fault-finding, that I feel now, in sending the sheets of this volume across the Atlantic, a confidence, I do not say in its success, but that it is sure to have a fair chance. I am under the impression that there exist some natural sympathies between me and my American readers, of a kind likely to make the relation between us easy and agreeable. I find across the Atlantic a livelier disposition to receive ideas on artistic subjects than I find in France, where criticism is traditional, and although in England pictures are liberally bought, it cannot be said that there is much general interest in the principles of art. The truth is, that the English get all the criticism they care for in the periodicals, and since I have written the art criticisms in

the "Saturday Review," I reach my home public in the way it seems to like best, — a fragmentary way, in which there is a great scattering of material, which, however, may ultimately be moulded into more permanent forms.



THOUGHTS ABOUT ART.

I.

THAT CERTAIN ARTISTS SHOULD WRITE ON ART.

EMERSON has said somewhere that no truths are so valuable as those we have come at in endeavoring to satisfy ourselves. The subject of the present chapter has, of course, possessed a personal interest for me, and its conclusions have cost me more thought and care than are usually bestowed on the getting up of a subject merely for literary treatment. If I have sufficient confidence in these conclusions to act upon them, it ought to be evident that, whether sound or not, they are at least sincere.

The use of literature cannot merely be to make authors famous and publishers rich. The important service it yields to mankind is *the perpetual registering of the experience of the race*. Without literature it is inconceivable that any race of men could reach a degree of culture comparable to ours, because, without a literature to record it, the experience of dead generations could never be fully available for the living one. Oral and practical tradition no doubt have their use, as we see to this day in many trades and professions; but this tradition is in our time nearly always aided by, or based upon, written records. And nothing is more characteristic of our age than its constantly increasing tendency to commit every thing to writing. The most ordinary professions and trades have their literatures, — trades which not long since were merely

traditional. The experience of the race is now registered by literature in all its departments. Our novelists paint the manners of their time. The avowed object of Balzac was to leave on record a speaking portraiture of French life in his time; and though he died before his plan was fully accomplished, he has left us, in the "*Comédie Humaine*," between two and three thousand characters, every one of which is, to all intents and purposes, a record of real life. The retrospective habit of the last generation, which sought only to revive the past, has given place to a wiser desire to register the present. This desire is wiser, not because the present is of necessity the best of models, but because it is the *only* one we can study from nature. Some critics accuse this recent tendency of a certain narrowness, as if it were from choice merely that our writers register what they see, whereas it is from an increasing desire to be true, which of course seeks those subjects that alone it is possible for us to paint truly.

So by their love of truth our novelists are driven to register the manners of their own time. How precious such registers will be in a thousand years! Thackeray and Balzac will make it possible for our descendants to live over again in the England and France of to-day. Seen in this light, the novelist has a higher office than merely to amuse his contemporaries; he hands them down all living and talking together to the remotest ages. When the new Houses of Parliament and the new Louvre shall be as antique to others as the Colosseum is to us, *they* shall know what manner of men and women first walked under the freshly carved arcades of the new palace on the banks of the Seine, and saw the tall towers grow year after year like young trees at Westminster.

This view of all literature as a register of human experience may be demurred to with regard to some of its departments. It may be objected, for example, that our contemporary poetry is no record of our experience. But it is a record of our *feelings*, and these are a part, and a very important part, of the experience of all cultivated

persons. A poem, which has been greatly popular in its own time, even though it may bear no very obvious relation to it, must nevertheless have been in close unison with much contemporary sentiment. Yet even in poetry the tendency to the registering of experience indubitably strengthens. Byron's masterpiece, "Don Juan," is not retrospective at all; even in "Childe Harold," the retrospection is by no means the strongest element; and the affectation of the antique, which mars the first two cantos, is frankly abandoned in the third and fourth. Mrs. Browning's best work, "Aurora Leigh," is modern to the core. Tennyson certainly goes back to the fables of King Arthur, but "In Memoriam," "Maud," and several of the best of his minor pieces, are as modern as "The New-comers."

I mentioned fiction and poetry first because they seemed the weakest point of my argument; but when, I come to periodical literature no one will for a moment dispute that it is strictly a register of all the thoughts and acts of humanity, day by day, week by week, and month by month. In the files of the *Times* our descendants will possess a full and detailed record, not only of our acts, but of our most transient opinions and hopes. A number of the *Times* has not done its work when you or I have read it. Other eyes will read it after a thousand years with all the advantages of that immense experience behind them! They will see us timidly delaying, or earnestly advocating, changes whose vast results shall to them be matter of history.

Such history as that of Macaulay and Motley is a register of the retrospective kind. It is like the early chapters of an autobiography. In an autobiography we have an accurate type of mankind's ways of placing itself on record. Such records or memories of their life as childhood and youth preserve to maturity are afterwards sifted, judged, arranged, and re-written by the grown man in the full light of his experience. Yet the past is continually slipping away from us, and, though we keep its results, we forget its circumstances. So all that we call history is no

better than the early or introductory chapter of Humanity's autobiography. Its best history is its *diary*; that is, its daily newspapers. For histories, though they may preserve facts, which is not always to be said of them, inevitably lose impressions, whereas journalists write down the most transient impressions of the intelligent class in their time. We may therefore look upon the *Times* newspaper not merely as a register of facts, but a record of thoughts.

The technical literature which has taken such a vast development of late is, however, the strongest basis of the argument I wish to enforce. The immense quantity of books published within the last twenty years for the especial use of particular trades and professions is one of the best results of the increase of population, and the consequent increase of professional readers. It is, perhaps, in law and medicine that this development is most remarkable; but it extends to all trades, for almost every mechanic can read, and cheap technical literature is brought within the reach of all purses. Mr. Weale, of Holborn, has published a very valuable series of cheap technical works at a shilling a volume. M. Roret, of Paris, has issued an immense encyclopædia, including every conceivable trade from common blacksmith's work up to religious architecture.


In reviewing all these technical works the first fact that strikes one with regard to their authors is, that they are none of them what we call literary men. They are not men who live by literature as a profession; they live by other trades or professions, and resort to literature only as a means of communicating to others their professional observations.

It therefore appears that literature is not an exclusive profession, but a common magazine to which intelligent men of all classes, and of every occupation, contribute the results of their particular experience. This is the point which I desire the reader to concede. If he maintains, as some literary men do, that literature is a profession which no one can enter without an exclusively literary

training, if he believes that no one ought to write who does any thing else, it will be necessary for me to argue my point more elaborately.

There is no proof that literature is an exclusive profession; if it is one, it presents the singular peculiarity that its professors are often surpassed by mere amateurs. It is not at all on the same footing with painting in this respect. The art of pictorial expression is quite technical, and peculiar to a certain limited class of students; the art of verbal expression is common to all men who can talk, and the art of literary expression to all who can write a letter. It is amazing that so many writers will not see a distinction so obvious, and yet one may be accused of the inconsistency of condemning practical dilettantism in painting as a folly, and being one's self a practical dilettante in letters.

It is not too much to say that, of the great writers of the world, at least one-half have been amateurs. Chaucer and Milton were; and even in the case of Shakespeare, though his plays made money, his authorship was secondary to his business of theatrical manager. Scott and Talfourd were both lawyers, not bred especially to literature; Kingsley is a clergyman, Ricardo was a banker, so is Grote; and John Stuart Mill was a hard-working servant of the East India Company. Sidney Dobell was a wine-merchant, and followed that business assiduously fifteen years. Samuel Warren is an industrious lawyer, Mr. Trollope a clerk in the Civil Service, and the author of "Tom Brown's School-days" a rising barrister, whom I have heard solicitors speak highly of in his professional capacity. These are names which occur to me whilst writing rapidly. If I took time to reflect, I should find a host of other instances of amateurs who have succeeded in literature; but this is quite needless. It is enough to suggest a truth so obvious. It can require no accumulation of evidence to show, what all men's experience proves, that the faculty of expressing one's self well in written language is by no means peculiar to those who earn their living by it. The contributors to our best reviews are not



invariably writers by profession, and their editors are only too happy to receive good articles written by intelligent men in the intervals of quite different avocations. The last phrase reminds me of a book called "Essays written in the Intervals of Business," which is now (1861) in its seventh edition, a fact which of itself proves that a man of business may successfully occupy himself with literature.

No merely literary man can, as such, be expected to write any one of those very useful and even necessary books which treat of subjects that require great special experience. Literary men never do write such books unless prepared for them, as Lewes was for his "Essays on Physiology," by a distinct professional education, quite apart from purely literary culture. If by accident a man who has been intended by his parents for a lawyer, and educated for the law, and who has practised for some years as a lawyer, afterwards abandons the law for general literature, he may nevertheless compose a legal treatise; but a magazine writer by profession, who had never received any legal education, could not.

There is no subject in the world of which the mere writer-of-all-work is less competent to treat than art. It is eminently a subject requiring practical experience and especial study. It cannot be grasped in its large relations by minds habitually occupied with other matters, and whose only claim to treat of it is their faculty of verbal expression. It demands great personal devotion, and untiring enthusiasm. It requires also much technical knowledge. The devotion and the enthusiasm are occasionally found in men who are not practically artists, the technical experience never.

This is the reason why our art criticism is for the most part so unprofitable. Even the best of it generally deals with works of art in their intellectual aspect only, with a slight admixture of technical jargon, but no intelligent reference to the facts of nature.

I do not, however, argue that artists should write criticism. It may be undesirable that painters should spend any of their time or energy in what would in their case be

too likely to degenerate into personal recrimination. It is true that literary men attack each other's works from behind the shelter of the anonymous, and a few of the best art criticisms are contributed to the periodicals by artists. But this is not a desirable direction for the talents of an artist who writes. His especial office with the pen is to contribute to the general enlightenment on the subject of art in its relation to nature, in ways which need not involve attacks on his living rivals.

True art critics will belong to a separate class, when we shall have enough of them to be called a class.

They ought to be especially educated for their office of criticism. They should be practically acquainted with all the ordinary difficulties of art. The commonest tricks of the studio constantly impose on persons who pretend to judge of performance in art without practical apprenticeship. A real critic can scarcely be an accomplished artist, but he must be able to draw delicately, and must have *tried* to color, or he will never know what color means. The most recondite secrets of method must all be as familiar to our critic as his alphabet. He must have drawn from the living figure and dissected the dead. If he presume to criticise landscape, he must have *lived* amongst the noblest natural landscapes, and there filled his note-books with thousands of memoranda. After long discipline in the life-school, on the mountains, in the forest, by the shores of the great lakes and the sea, out on the storm-waves, and *lastly* in all the best galleries of Europe, his opinions concerning painting may come to be worth listening to, but not otherwise.

Critics of this order ought of course to be able to express themselves well in written language, but they would not criticise because they were able to write, as so many do now, but, on the contrary, write because they were qualified to criticise, which is a different thing.

Our common critics at present have little to say, but they say it cleverly.

And our painters have often much to say, but they cannot say it at all, or, at the best, clumsily.

I was present on one occasion when a distinguished painter was asked by a young author how it happened that artists so rarely wrote upon their own art. "Because," said the painter, "they are so generally deficient in the first rudiments of a literary education." I believe that answer, however unfavorable to artists, to have been much nearer to the truth than the common theory that there is something essentially incompatible between the literary and artistic intellects. Certainly Ary Scheffer recognized no such incompatibility when he said, that "pour être artiste, il faut avoir en soi un sentiment élevé, ou une conviction puissante, digne d'être exprimé par une langue qui peut être indifféremment la prose, la poésie, la musique, la sculpture, ou la peinture." But writing is always extremely irksome and disagreeable to uneducated people. If the reader had seen certain letters by successful painters, he would not wonder at their feeling uneasy with a pen. It is on record that a famous artist wrote academy *accademy*. Another excellent artist, who has achieved success in the exhibitions of that society, wrote several letters, in all of which the word "exhibition" was spelt without the *h*. So here are two first-rate painters who could not either of them spell *both* the two words "academy" "exhibition," the two words in the whole language most familiar to the artist in his professional capacity. Here is a charming extract from a letter from a leading member of another great artistic corporation: "My out-door *studdy* begins in *Aprill*. Last year I took *Holand* and *Beligeum*. I *commence* as usual, but next year's *rout* I have not decided on, though I have a strong inclination to *visset* Switzerland again." Turner, of course, spelt badly too; but Mr. Ruskin has had the ingenuity to discover a sort of merit, such as it is, in Turner's bad spelling, which I am sure we are all very much obliged to him for pointing out to us. "All his mistakes in spelling," says his great admirer, "are economical. Many bad spellers waste their letters; but Turner, never. 'Engin' for 'engine;' 'Aust' for 'Aoste,' or 'Aouste;' 'sumit' for 'summit,' or 'sommite;' 'Iser' for 'Isere;' 'le Alps' for 'les Alpes,' &c."

Persons to whom the mere act of writing is the most arduous of all exertion are not likely to spend more time upon it than they are absolutely compelled so to spend. This simple consideration is sufficient to account for the fact that artists, in general, are not communicative by means of the pen. If they were all taught to read and write before they began to paint, as clergymen and lawyers are before they begin to preach and to practise, artist writers would, probably, bear as great a proportion to the numbers employed in their art as legal and clerical authors to the other members of their professions. And if painters were so taught to read and write, perhaps they would not paint any worse for it. It does not follow that Turner would have painted less skilfully if he had had such a degree of education as every schoolboy of twelve years old ought to possess. If he had been able to write good English, and even spell such French words as he required as titles to his drawings, he might, nevertheless, in spite of these attainments, have reached his present rank as a landscape painter.

Those who think that a great artist should shut himself up in mystery and solitude, like the Grand Lama, will say that it is beneath his dignity to communicate any thought to the world, except such as it may discover in his canvases. But the sort of dignity which is only to be kept up by holding aloof from men is scarcely worth keeping up at all. One consequence of this reticence on the part of artists is, that the true art of coloring is almost lost to us, and that whilst we have a hundred volumes by connoisseurs concerning an art they knew nothing about, we have scarcely a line of record from any truly great artist, giving an intelligible account of his technical methods and observations.

In the case of artists who can write and don't, there may be two reasons for their silence. The first is, that when a successful painter lays down the brush to take up a pen, he is sacrificing, for each hour that he writes, a certain calculable sum of money; another reason is a strong conviction, common to most artists, that if they were to say any thing

about their art it would be of no use, because the public could not understand it.

This feeling has hitherto been well founded, but there can be no doubt that a certain portion of the public is advancing towards such a knowledge of art as will shortly enable it to receive the teaching even of artists themselves. The consequence of this, and its inevitable result in creating a demand for a kind of literature relating to the fine arts, will be, that unless artists are themselves prepared to supply such a literature, they will be supplanted by dilettantes, who will thus acquire an influence over public opinion on matters connected with art to which they have no natural right. On the other hand, the public itself must be retarded in its art culture by the dissemination of crude and imperfect theories. And since it has not time to investigate such matters for itself, and must always take them on trust from some one in temporary authority, society will, of course, set up its favorite writers as rulers, against whose verdict there will be no appeal. It appears therefore desirable that a few artists in each generation should themselves contribute to the literature of art, in order to maintain the influence which their knowledge entitles them to. For as the priesthood in every religion takes into its own hands the production of a theological literature based on its especial tenets, so, it appears, ought painters to lead the literature of their own art, though I would not discourage intelligent amateurs from freely contributing to it.

It is said that pictures ought to speak for themselves. But universal experience proves that pictures only speak to persons already advanced in art culture, just as books can only reach people who have learned to read. Books on art are a concession to the general incapacity to *see*. If people could *see*, artists could teach them directly, without the intervention of literary interpreters. But most people find it easier to read books about art than to read the art itself. They require to be told to look before they will look, and they require also to be told what to look for. It is owing to this incapacity for seeing without

being told, that art itself, and the literature which concerns itself with natural aspects, are necessary to men, else, I suppose, they could enjoy nature without the intervention of painters and writers. At present we enjoy nature much in this fashion. Mr. Turner perceives that mist is beautiful, and paints it. But nobody understands the mist in the picture, because it looks so odd and indistinct. Then comes Mr. Ruskin to tell the folks, this time in plain English, not in paint, and in a fine large legible type, that Turner meant to paint *mist*, because mist in nature was to him something charming and delightful. After all this has been stated in print, we go to the Turner Gallery, and perceive that it is indeed mist that Turner meant; then we go to look at natural mist to see whether the Turnerian account of it is true.

Thus there is always some critic or connoisseur between the painter and the public, whose office it is to persuade the public to look at the painter's work, and the painter in his turn has to get the spectator to look at nature, if he can. Writers on nature and art are clever oculists, for they give sight to the blind. But all such writing is a condescension to that blindness. All the principles of architecture that Ruskin has ever stated are contained and exemplified in half a dozen ruinous old buildings; but very few people saw them in the buildings till they read about them in the books. So all the principles of painting that he has illustrated and enforced, and a thousand others that no words can ever express, are fully contained and splendidly exemplified in the works of five or six great artists. But in order to see them in the pictures it was necessary first to read about them in the book. The crumbling stone and mouldering canvas gave their lessons unheeded to thankless and careless children, but the attention of these children was at once arrested by brilliant language that they could easily understand, and fresh-looking, well-printed pages, that it was a pleasure to read.

Pictures to be understood by the great public always require a commentary, and the best commentators would often be the painters themselves, if they would condescend

to explanation. A great service would be rendered by certain artists to the public if they accompanied their most original works with a printed note, kindly explaining every thing that the ordinary spectator could not be expected to understand, and gently guiding his attention to such natural phenomena as had been translated on the canvas. Such friendly condescension would do more to advance a right understanding of art than endless literary criticism of it. For a careful painter must necessarily have looked at nature, which cannot with equal certainty be predicted of a clever critic; and a painter must, at least, have *seen* a picture he has himself painted, whereas a critic will often put together a few clever phrases about a work he has never really taken the trouble to look into. If we had a complete catalogue of all Turner's works, carefully annotated by himself, with details of the circumstances under which every impression was received and recorded, how interesting and precious it would be! The only notes at all like this, left by any great artist, are, I imagine, those brief ones by Reynolds on the materials employed in his portraits. Such notes ought, of course, to include processes and materials, giving a faithful account of the technical history of the work; but this is not enough, the intellectual history of it should be recorded too; and in the case of landscapes every thing interesting in the locality should be pointed out, all changes in the topography of the place for the sake of composition being frankly confessed.

In this way the *registering* function of the pen would be very usefully exercised, but I would not have the literary work of all artists limited to this. Those who have a natural capacity for literary expression ought to record, in the form of essays and treatises, or, if professors in any academy, in the form of lectures, their views on those great questions of art which are yet subject to dispute, and also their sincere opinions on deceased artists. It would be extremely interesting, for example, and very instructive, to know what Turner really thought of Claude, as we should know it if he had written a treatise

on Claude. The fact that Velasquez liked Titian, and did not like Raphael, is one of the most interesting things which have descended to us concerning him. And though the discourses of Sir Joshua Reynolds are full of fallacies, no one who loves art would consent that they should be lost, because, whether erroneous or not, they are a true record of his opinions, and all that he thought is interesting to us.

One of the best examples of a kind of art literature, which falls naturally within the province of the professional artist, is Sir Charles Eastlake's "*Materials for a History of Oil Painting.*" The great learning and research which he has devoted to the elucidation of technical details of the most useful kind peculiarly entitle him to the gratitude of artists.

The biography of artists is the department of literature in which painters have hitherto chiefly distinguished themselves. The biographer of a painter has frequent opportunities of conveying opinions on art and on matters connected with art, without that directness which makes the writer of essays so peculiarly responsible. Vasari's lives, though not written with that vivid reality which our most recent school of history aims at, are nevertheless a durable monument raised by one artist to his brethren and ancestors in art.

I have said that the reserve of artists who are able to write and do not is, in part, due to their impression that the public is too ignorant to understand them, — too ignorant, that is, to understand the said artists as the artists would express themselves. There is, however, another side to this question. People who are not understood may be so from *two* causes, either the want of intelligence in others, or the want of expressional art in themselves. This last want often makes them irritable and discourteous when their opinion is asked for by persons whom they consider incapable of comprehending it if given. I have seen artists who, when asked what were the best technical processes in use at the present day, would become impatient, as if there were something really absurd in the

question, whereas it is a pre-eminently rational question, and one which admits of a ready, though not a brief reply. This comes of their want of literary practice, and their consequent difficulty in expression. There is a passage in Emerson's Essay on Plato very much to the point. "Children cry, scream, and stamp with fury, unable to express their desires. As soon as they can speak, and tell their want, and the reason of it, they become gentle. In adult life, whilst the perceptions are obtuse, men and women talk vehemently and superlatively, blunder and quarrel: their manners are full of desperation, their speech is full of oaths. As soon as with culture things have cleared up a little, and they see them no longer in lumps and masses, but accurately distributed, they desist from that weak vehemence and explain their meaning in detail. If the tongue had not been framed for articulation, man would still be a beast in the forest. The same weakness and want, on a higher plane, occur daily in the education of ardent young men and women. 'Ah! you don't understand me; I have never met with any one who comprehends me;' and they sigh and weep, write verses and walk alone, — fault of power to express their precise meaning. In a month or two, through the favor of their good genius, they meet some one so related as to assist their volcanic estate; and good communication being once established they are thenceforward good citizens."

If it needs culture to receive, it also needs culture to communicate ideas by words. When artists know something about art they usually say that it is incommunicable, which, in most cases, only means that the man himself does not know how to explain it. Ignorant artists cannot even teach pupils except by example, which, whatever may be said of it in morals, needs, in art, to be accompanied by a great deal of intelligent commentary and precept if it is to be of any great use to the learner. But the ordinary artist can only *do*; he cannot explain how it is done, even with all the advantages of direct personal communication, much less in a book.

No one will be astonished at this who has ever had

occasion to seek information from illiterate people on subjects they practically understand. A marine engineer of great experience told me that the ordinary workmen in his business know nothing whatever of the principles which govern their own work, and could not explain the very things they themselves make without falling into endless blunders. Many a homely illustration of the same truth may be found in the details of a farm. Illiterate farmers not only *will* not, but really *cannot*, explain their most habitual operations, because to explain any thing rightly requires long practice in intellectual analysis, and a command of words. The author of a popular little book, "Our Farm of Four Acres," found that it was useless to consult farmers' wives on the important subject of butter-making. I believe that it is generally equally useless to consult artists on the subject of picture-making, and for the same reason. But when intelligent ladies take to farming, as Madame Millet-Robinet has done, it is astonishing how many things *they* find means to explain, and how lucidly they explain them. It also seems probable that when intelligent and cultivated gentlemen, like Sir Charles Eastlake and Mr. Leslie, are no longer rare in the artist class, artists will more frequently write on art.

II.

PAINTING FROM NATURE.

THE practice of painting from nature, in the modern sense, is of very recent adoption. It is probable that before our own time no landscape painter ever began and finished an oil *picture* out of doors and from nature itself. Figure painters painted from nature, and landscape painters made studies from nature, with more or less accuracy and resolution; but no one seriously thought of finishing any thing but mere sketches or studies out of doors. The art of landscape painting was essentially practised in the studio; its materials were gathered in the fields, like the raw material of human food, but cooked in the artistic kitchen before being served up for the appreciation of the connoisseur. At the present day, however, many painters — especially our younger ones — are devoting immense labor to the finishing of pictures out of doors; a costly and inconvenient proceeding, and one which ought to reward its votaries very richly for all the trouble and fatigue it inevitably entails.

I propose in the present chapter to analyze the art of painting from nature, to point out the various ways in which it may be pursued, to examine one by one all the principal difficulties against which painters who work directly from nature have continually to contend, and lastly to suggest certain plans and contrivances by which a few of the most irritating of them may be combated and overcome.

It is not to be supposed that, in taking their canvases out of doors, all painters propose to themselves the same object. A certain limitation is always, whether consciously or unconsciously, imposed on himself by every artist in his imitation of nature. If no such limitation

were resolved upon by the artist, no picture would ever be finished, and no artist would ever have done with any one of his works. If, on the other hand, no such limitation were accepted by the public, no human labor could ever satisfy it. But it so happens, that, so far from being unpopular, a strict limitation of the imitative art is quite joyfully understood and admitted by everybody ; sketches being generally quite as much liked in their way as finished pictures ; and pictures which are little more than sketches in oil, as, for instance, those of Décamps, being often eagerly purchased by collectors. Every artist, therefore, has his point of limitation, his finishing point, and he has also his point of imitation, beyond which he does not think fit to follow nature. Even the severest pre-Raphaelite must make up his mind to stop *somewhere* in his copyism of natural objects, — if he could not submit to this, he would have to abandon the art altogether, for the pursuit of it with unbridled instincts of imitation would be altogether intolerable, and enough to drive any man mad. These two limitations of finish and of imitation are, however, very different things. A painter may finish minutely without imitating minutely ; but he cannot imitate minutely without finishing minutely. In working from nature, *all* the limitations that the painter has accepted hem him in and determine the character of his work. Those limitations are of all kinds, — they may be purely conventional, as, for instance, the classicism of Sir George Beaumont ; they may be fixed by the practice of some former master whom the artist looks up to as an authority that it would be presumptuous to surpass ; they may be settled for the painter by the narrowness of his own sympathies and the dulness of his own sight, and so be the most impassable of all prison boundaries, — those of a man's own nature. Lastly, they may be wise and necessary limitations, imposed upon himself consciously, severely, and sorrowfully, by a great man who thoroughly loves Nature, and longs to follow her wherever she would lead him, but who restrains himself at a certain definite point, knowing that human weakness can go no farther without failure.

In order to place more vividly before the reader the manner in which these limitations operate, I will show how several different classes of painters work from nature, and afterwards explain what, in my own conception, is the wisest way of working from nature.

THE CLASSICAL SCHOOL.

These painters do, indeed, work from nature, but they adapt all they find to preconceived ideas in their own minds, formed from famous pictures in the galleries. They are painting from nature in quite a peculiar sense. Claude and Poussin stand between them and every thing they see. When they see any thing in nature that is like Claude, they think it good for art, and introduce it; first carefully altering it in a Claudesque manner. When they find things not to be found in Claude or Poussin, a circumstance that must very frequently occur to them, they reject them without hesitation, as unfitted for artistic purposes. I have actually heard of two foreign artists of this kind, one of whom, when travelling in the Highlands, on seeing a magnificent effect at Loch Awe, rather contemptuously observed to the other that "the effect was *false*," though in nature itself, his standard of truth being not nature, but Claude.* All classical students approach nature in this spirit. They do not go to her to be taught, but to impose their own rules on all they take; consequently they learn nothing. Once benumb the human soul with the fatal mesmerism of too much reverence for some dead man's name, and you can render it for ever blind to the plainest facts in the world it lives in. All classical art-students have accepted the principle that the perfection of landscape art was attained two hundred years ago by the classical landscape painters, and during all their lives will

* Suppose this painter had seen a true *picture* of the effect which he called false in nature, would he not have called it false also in art?

Yes; and there is another thing to be said.

Other people, who would not have dared to call the effect false in nature, would have called it false in art, though truly painted; and they do so constantly.

see nothing except through the Poussin spectacles. For them nature only exists as a mine of possible Claudes and Poussins, and where they do not see Claude or Poussin, they see *nothing*. Their real aim is to imitate these two masters; but they disdainfully accept from nature — which they really despise — the raw material for their performances. And Nature, who yields nothing that we do not toil for, only yields them faint shadows of gallery compositions.* Not one of all her precious truths will she let them have. They believe in the classical landscape painters, and Nature lets them paint classical landscape. Let them cry to their own gods, for the God of Nature will grant them nothing.†

THE IMAGINATIVE MODERN SCHOOL.

They are too original and have too much natural ability to allow of their patiently Poussinizing nature; but they are, at the same time, too independent and self-reliant to imitate her. They paint from imagination in the presence of nature, using nature merely for the first suggestion of the idea, and in the subsequent progress of the work as an authority on scientific facts of form, color, geology, botany, meteorology, &c., &c.

In works produced on this principle there is no pretence to imitation, although the painter may begin and finish his picture out of doors, and although, when finished, the work may *seem* imitative.

As painters of the classical school are prevented from imitating by their reverence for dead artists, so these can-

* There is an invention intended for the especial use of this class of students; a small black mirror, called a Claude glass, intended to blacken natural color to the hues of old pictures in the galleries, which, in addition to their own inherent want of color, are darkened by the dirt of centuries. The invention answers its purpose perfectly, and confirms the wilful purblindness of the human owls who use it.

† Happily, this foolish sort of study is all but extinct in England, but it flourishes still on the Continent under the protection of figure painters, who always rule academies and schools of art, and who have a natural instinct to repress the advance of landscape by lending all the weight of their authority to the shallow landscape painters of the seventeenth century.

not imitate because their imagination is too strong, and they must obey it. They love nature quite sincerely and exclusively, caring for other artists only so far as they lead them to nature. Nevertheless, they cannot imitate nature, because, in them, imagination overrules the imitative tendency. Artists of this order, when the imagination is not only powerful but of truly inventive quality (an imagination may be powerful that is not in the artistic sense inventive), if their imagination is really of the inventive order, such artists would do quite wrong to imitate, for loyalty to the laws of its constitution is the first duty of genius. These artists use natural phenomena exactly as a novelist uses the people he meets with; they study them, and employ them as they think fit. But as, after all, they really *do* study them, and not scorn them like the classical landscape painters, they have their reward, and learn much, though they copy little. The most illustrious example of this order of artists is Turner. I believe he never really *imitated* any natural object in his whole life. In the early part of his career, being subjected to the prevailing theories, he wore the Claude and Poussin spectacles for a while, but soon threw them aside for ever. After that he *looked* at nature earnestly, learned an immense number of facts, gathered a huge encyclopædia of observations, but never once imitated without altering. He used external nature as Scott used mankind. Both were authors of fiction, yet both eminently *true* in their work. One cannot quarrel with painters and writers of this order because they give the full rein to their imagination; for the imaginative faculty was just as much given to be *used* as the imitative faculty. Nor does *such* altering as theirs imply the slightest want of reverence for nature. They revere nature none the less that they also respect the laws of their own nature.

It is evident that working out of doors on this principle cannot be so painfully laborious a process as strict imitation would be. It is, in fact, little more than swift sketching of memoranda, even when color is used. And if painters of this order ever finish from nature it is

merely to have the scientific facts right, not for accuracy of form; so that they do not copy Nature, they merely *refer* to her as an author refers to the books in his library on matters of fact about which he is anxious to avoid error; but this is a very different thing to copying the books out, word for word, comma for comma.

THE ARTIFICIAL OR TECHNICAL SCHOOL.

They do not yet imitate in the accurate sense, but there is something bearing a distant resemblance to imitation visible in the outlines of their principal masses, yet even these are wilfully arranged. They use nature for reference; and there is a general appearance of likeness in their work, more satisfactory to common judges than the wholly imaginative arrangement of Turner.

They avoid detail, however, wherever mere skilful manipulation of color may be made to stand for it. How far such manipulation may be made to go is very remarkable. It may be made to represent any thing that has no very definite form, and consequently does duty for a great deal of hard drawing. These painters do not really paint detail, but their skilful manipulation conveys the impression of detail.

I may make myself better understood by naming Mr. Harding as a well-known representative of this order of artists. The amount of manual skill and dexterity lavished by Mr. Harding on a system of interpretation, whose uniform aim and object is to avoid any thing like downright study of detail, is quite marvellous. He is not in any sense an imitator, but a skilled interpreter of nature. I do not intend this as praise, and still less as blame. Every artist must work according to his own constitution. Mr. Harding is not by constitution an imitator, but a translator. He and nature do not speak the same language, have not the same formulæ. He is not a student trying hard to learn nature's language, but a great professor, foreign to nature, writing a translation of nature into his own tongue. The translation is exceedingly

clever and brilliant, but it bears just as much resemblance to the original as Mr. Pope's translation of the "Iliad" does to the old Greek. Some people like Pope better than Homer, and some no doubt secretly prefer Mr. Harding to nature; but it does not at all follow that if you like the original you will relish the translation, nor the converse.

The influence which Mr. Harding has so long exercised over the immense number of amateurs who put their trust in him has been, on the whole, more salutary than might have been expected, considering that the first condition of popularity amongst amateurs is, that you are not to teach true art, but a pretty and cheap substitute for art, — cheap, I mean, in cost of labor. No drawing-master could earn his living by teaching art seriously, and the chief anxiety of every drawing-master is to invent the prettiest and easiest substitute for real art that he can. Now, Mr. Harding's substitute was extremely pretty and successful, and, what is much more to his credit, it really contained as much truth as the amateurs it was intended for were ever likely to tolerate. *Up to a certain point*, Mr. Harding led his scholars to nature; but the worst of all such systems as his is, that, once their fixed point reached, they arrest the education of the eye.

Of course, Mr. Harding is not the only artist of this class. They are, in fact, exceedingly numerous, and each has a system of his own, in many cases quite as original, if not so cleverly contrived as Mr. Harding's. Their uniform object, so far as they are themselves concerned, is to escape the painful elaboration of detail, which the principles of imitation demand. Their other object, as to their pupils, is to supply an easy and cheap substitute for genuine work. Nevertheless, they study nature laboriously *within the limits imposed by their own systems*. I believe that in very many cases such systems are to be attributed entirely to the fact of the painter's giving lessons to amateurs, and that, if it were not necessary to flatter pupils with easy methods, such painters would often frankly abandon their systems altogether, and devote

themselves in good earnest to the study of nature, accepting only the necessary and inevitable limitations, not these unnecessary artificial ones.

SHALLOW PSEUDO-IMITATORS.

We begin now to enter upon the province of imitation, but are as yet only on its frontiers.

These painters do indeed imitate, but only just so far as a common and very careless spectator is likely to see into the subject when he idly gazes at it without observing it. They are of a very popular order, for they accurately reproduce, not the scene itself, nor any thing really resembling it, but every indolent spectator's impression of it. Their pictures demand little intelligence in the spectator as they cost little to the artist. They are, therefore, intelligible, which is the first of all the conditions of saleableness, and such works are produced for the market in immense numbers.

In these works nature is happily arranged on received principles of composition, and such truths only are stated as are conducive to prettiness and perfectly easy to understand.

CLEVER AND LABORIOUS PSEUDO-IMITATORS.

They are not imitators in the pre-Raphaelite sense; but their work from nature goes very far, and is exceedingly laborious in detail. The difference between their imitation and pre-Raphaelite imitation is very easy to feel and very difficult to explain. It consists in this, that their fidelity is limited by habits of continual alteration and absolute want of intellectual and moral sympathy with the objects they illustrate, so that they never seize the significant marks. They admire nature, and have much energy and industry, so they work hard, and produce landscapes very full of detail; but they do not really sympathize with the expression of inanimate objects, so as to render it with power. Nor is any one of their

details perfectly accurate ; they do not love nature well enough for that. They fill their canvas with detail to make it rich, and the detail is really very cleverly painted, and all copied from nature from beginning to end out of doors, only not one atom of it is thoroughly genuine and true. On the other hand, it is seldom imaginative, because the gift of invention is so rare. I could name a score of successful landscape painters who belong to this class, clever, prosperous, and most industrious workmen in a high branch of manufacture, but neither true poets nor accurate observers. Their habits of work have nothing in common with Harding's masterly tricks of interpretation ; they are scarcely intellectual enough to conceive and apply such principles. They are looked upon by the public as tolerably faithful imitators, the real fact being that they are only pseudo-imitators. As on the one hand their works have none of the majesty of imagination, so on the other they lack the preciousness of genuine imitation.

Painters of this order are often very rapid and skilful in working from nature, because the constant habit of manufacture leads to a certain dexterousness quite impossible for close observers and copyists of nature, and seldom compatible with great depth of feeling. Their exaggerations and changes of all kinds are suggested solely by their ideas of what would look well in the picture, not by any real *feeling*. Now, as all changes are sure to be wrong which are not dictated imperatively by intense and irresistible emotion, these changes of theirs are ruinous to the value of their work.

THE TRUE IMITATIVE SCHOOL.

We have come to true imitation at last. These painters work from nature in quite a different sense to any of the preceding ones. They really endeavor to render as much of nature as is to be rendered by color, but will not sacrifice greater truths to less, and stop firmly at that difficult point where the imitation of details, pushed to its utter-

most lawful power, is to be sternly arrested before it endangers the truth of the whole work. Pass this point ever so little, and your work is inevitably ruined, for the over-fidelity with which some favorite bit of detail is sure to be imitated will destroy the harmony of the whole. If, on the other hand, you fall short of this point, your art of painting from nature is not yet quite perfectly and preciously imitative. This high order of imitative painting requires great knowledge of the resources of art, and infinite patience and industry. I shall have more to say of it shortly.

ASPIRANTS AFTER PERFECT ACCURACY.

Painters in whom the desire for accuracy has reached a morbid excess, and in whose works the passion for truth of imitation is so unrestrained by artistic judgment as to be destructive to pictorial harmony.

This leads to the production of studies, of which parts are well painted, but entirely out of harmony with other parts. With the passion for accuracy in excess, all production of true pictorial art is quite impossible, for no natural materials can be woven together into the shape of a complete picture without some sacrifice of accuracy.

It is impossible, however, to continue *long* in this state of mind, which is merely a disease of the imitative faculties, and always leads either to the entire abandonment of the art, or the conscious and resolute acceptance of the limitations necessary to the health of the artistic intellect.

A common delusion of young painters is to suppose that this over-accuracy is in itself an attractive quality, because it costs them immense patience and labor. They naturally value it too much in proportion to what it costs *them*, and without sufficient reference to the effect it is able to produce on others. But I fear that this, the costliest of qualities in a picture, is the very one which produces the least effect upon the world. It will not help a picture to find a place in the exhibition, because the judges cannot have the real scene before their eyes for

comparison, and always look for qualities of composition which rigid accuracy requires us to sacrifice. It will not command a purchaser, because, if the purchaser knows the scene,* an accurate transcript of it will inevitably seem to him inadequate and spiritless, whereas, if he does *not* know it, the accuracy will, of course, be quite thrown away upon him. It will not catch the critics, because critics consider accuracy incompatible with imagination, and therefore do not consider accurate painters as artists at all in the higher sense.

And yet the difference in cost of labor and eyesight between a work which is strictly accurate and another which is only accurate enough for the purposes of art is something amazing.

I am writing this in my tent during a little interval when I feel too tired to go on with a difficult piece of strict topographic drawing.

I therefore find myself in a position to speak with some authority on this question, for just at present I am engaged upon a series of drawings, undertaken for an especial purpose, and which I am determined to have as accurate as I can get them.

The topographic drawing I have in hand is of small dimensions, and it will take me, I can scarcely tell how long. The labor too, whilst I am doing it, is extremely severe, — severe on the eyes, and requiring so close a degree of attention that it is impossible to pursue it for long together without rest.

But if I were not trying for topographic accuracy, I could make a drawing of the same scene, which would please a critic or a council of academicians much better, in a couple of hours of easy work, singing songs all the time, or talking with a friend.

Painters in whom imitation has become a disease work in this way, not exceptionally, and for an especial purpose, as I am doing now, but habitually. And as they do not

* This for reasons stated in a chapter in the second volume, on the relation between photography and painting.

limit themselves, they encounter the everlasting boundaries with which the Supreme Artist has hedged round all his poor human imitators, and so they ruin all they do, because they do not know where to stop.*

I have thus roughly indicated seven of the different classes of painters, all of whom may occasionally work from nature. The subdivisions in such an attempt at classification are, however, as numerous as the landscape painters themselves, for nearly every one has a way of work slightly differing from that of all other men, even those of his own school and sect. The seven divisions are, nevertheless, minute enough for my purposes. And I think it will be very evident that artists who work on principles so widely different must produce works of a very different character, even when studying from the same natural scene, and further, that the art of painting from nature seen from these various points of view is scarcely to be spoken of as one art. It is at least seven arts whose objects are entirely distinct, and whose practice differs quite as essentially as some of them differ from the art of painting from memoranda in the studio. In speaking, therefore, of painting from nature as a single art, I must be understood to mean that which I practise myself, for I have not space in the limits of one chapter to do any thing like justice to the practice of other artists, except so far as I may roughly indicate their various ways of work.

The first secret of the painter from nature is to select his subject wisely.

None but foreground subjects can be really painted from nature in a climate so changeable as ours; but there is a kind of intermediate art, a combination of the two arts of painting from nature and painting from memoranda, which is competent to deal with mountains.

To illustrate this, take a single instance of no extraordinary difficulty. The painter wants a faithful picture of

* In the particular piece of work alluded to, I myself was limited by the nature of my materials, plain pen and ink, and the extreme simplicity of my aim, which did not include either local color or light and shade. Oil color imposes no such salutary limitations.

Ben Cruachan. So he plants his easel as near to the mountain as he can get it, if he wishes to see it at all, which of course must be a few miles off. He sits down conscientiously to paint a portrait of Ben Cruachan from nature.

The first day is the 10th of July. A good, plain daylight effect is on the hill, — not a difficult evanescent effect, but such plain daylight as an unimaginative copyist likes best.

The picture cannot possibly be finished before the 10th of August.

On the 10th of July, the water is a deep blue, the mountain a pale, but rich olive-green, with a peculiar velvety texture, any thing but easy to imitate.

The next day the water is cold gray, almost white, and the mountain full of various new grays and deep purples, with an entirely new texture not at all velvety.

Now, the question is, whether the painter, in continuing to paint the effect of the 10th of July on the 11th, is painting from nature or from memory.

He is painting from *memory*. It is self-deception on his part to fancy that he is painting from nature, merely because he is working out of doors.

And day after day there is a new and brilliant effect; inconceivably more brilliant in its imposing presence than the painter's fast fading recollection of what he saw on the 10th of July. If he is determined to finish the picture from nature, in the sense of direct copyism of the hues before him, there are only two ways of doing it. Either he may paint from nature day by day, and so make his picture intensely unnatural, by mixing together a hundred incompatible and contradictory effects, or he may paint whenever the chosen effect shall recur, which may be five or six times in a twelvemonth.

It might be objected that in working from nature he would at least get the *form* of the mountain; *that*, at least, might be expected to remain stationary.

Not a bit of it. The form of a mountain under changing light is the most unstable thing in the world, except that

of a sea wave. *The perception of mountain form is entirely dependent on effect.* A great, rough boss on the side of a mountain is its principal feature one minute, and the next you cannot find it, — seek as you will, you cannot find it any more than if the thing had been fairly chiselled away by the hand of a great sculptor. Rocks alter in apparent shape as the light changes. A wreath of mist creeps stealthily, and shows you a chasm you never suspected yesterday; a sunbeam falls, and a great crag leaps out to bask in it like an eagle from the copse. And after a certain practical apprenticeship, the student at last discovers that the *only* truth of landscape painting is temporary effect, and that *real form belongs to sculpture alone.*

It is, I hope, unnecessary for me to explain that clouds can never be painted from nature. Even the slowest of them are full of rapid and continual change, which, however little seen by careless, unobservant people, is only too evident as soon as one attempts to draw them. The utmost that can really be got from nature of a complete *sky* is a rude pencil memorandum of the arrangement of its principal masses, not pretending to form in any part of it, still less to color. A rapid draughtsman may, however, get a tolerable pencil outline of a single cloud, if he tries for that only. But all attempts to paint skies from nature are futile. Constable's way of sketching them in oil may have served occasionally for a rude memorandum of the relations of color in a common lowland sky, but he had to sacrifice all the forms.

Trees may be painted from nature if they are near to us, and on condition that we work only for two hours at a time on the same picture, and in lowland scenery where there is much sameness of effect.

Rocks admit of careful and accurate painting from nature, so of course does a great precipice, if we are near to it. A great deal of good material for artists who paint from nature is to be had along our own coasts. The cliffs on the southern coast are excellent subjects, and the climate not unfavorable.

Water may occasionally, as for instance in rapidly run-

ning streams, be painted from nature, because there the same forms are continually reproduced by the effect of the submerged stones on the surface of the water ; but great expanses of broad rivers and lakes cannot be painted from nature at all, because they change incessantly. It is needless to add that the sea cannot be painted from nature in the strict sense, though it may, no doubt, under certain circumstances, be wise to paint it from memoranda in the presence of nature.

In the selection of climate, a painter who works from nature on pre-Raphaelite principles must, of course, be guided by his practical convenience, and not by the splendor of the scenery.

Perhaps, of all the climates in Europe, that of the Highlands of Scotland is the very worst for painting from nature. The continual prevalence of rainy weather, the incessant changes of effect, the intense brilliance of the color, subject everywhere to sudden and violent revolution, the frequent occurrence of low rain-clouds which hide the hills much more effectually than a cloak hides the human form, all these objections are in the aggregate insuperable, and not to be lightly laughed away as small evils which a little resolution would overcome. The Highlands of Scotland are a noble field for painters from memoranda ; but artists who wish to work from nature ought not to think of going there.

On the other hand, lowland France is a perfect climate for painting from nature. On the borders of Burgundy and Champagne, on the banks of the river Yonne, it is possible to work from nature as many days in one year as you would get in seven years in the Highlands. And those French subjects, if not so grand as the Highland scenery, are infinitely *prettier*, infinitely easier to deal with, and, I should imagine, could be worked up into more popular pictures.

I have such a strong dislike to any thing like uncertainty or hesitation in painting, and so great an impatience of alteration in a picture once begun, that my preparatory work before really taking up color is always rather long

and laborious. Every additional year's experience confirms me, however, in this tendency, and I have got so much into the habit of settling every thing about a picture before I lay the dead color, that in working even from the kindest and most accommodating scenery I like to furnish myself with a careful study of form in pen and ink on a separate sheet of paper before beginning the picture. In lowland scenery I do not say that such precautions are absolutely necessary; but in all painting of mountains they are indispensable.

I have said that it is possible to paint mountains from nature by the help of memoranda. Perhaps such work ought rather to be called painting from memoranda, aided by reference to nature; but as the work, whatever it is, is after all done out of doors and not in the studio, I have determined to treat of it here rather than in the other volume.

In attacking a difficult mountain subject, the most prudent way to set about it is, in my opinion, as follows:—

First, to select the point of view with infinite care and thought, spending several days in making sketches of the mountain as seen from different places, and afterwards comparing them and choosing the place from which its character is to be seen best.

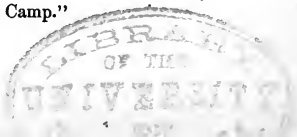
The next thing to be done is to set up a tent on the spot, a painting-tent like the one I have myself invented being the best. For the benefit of painters I shall describe it here, warning other readers beforehand that the passage may be skipped without losing the thread of the subject we are considering.

When describing my hut,* I took occasion to observe that a tent might be constructed having all the advantages of the hut with greater space and superior portability.

I have since designed such a tent, which has been executed with the most scrupulous and admirable exactness by that prince of tent-makers, Mr. Benjamin Edgington.

This tent is, I think, the perfect ideal of a studio for an

* In the "Painter's Camp."



artist who paints from nature, and on a moderate scale. I have worked from nature in it in the coldest weather of an unusually cold Highland winter, just as comfortably as if I had been working in a room in London of no larger dimensions. The tent is so strong, too, that it has resisted, when in a very exposed situation, a series of equinoctial gales of truly northern violence. I have been perfectly amazed to see its light canvas walls and tall white roof standing firm day after day in the midst of a roaring, rushing stream of wind, like a rock in a torrent of water.

Its construction is simple enough to admit of easy and intelligible description.

On a cube of eight feet every way, place a pyramid six feet high and eight feet square at its base. That gives the outward form.

The structure is thus arranged : —

The perpendicular canvas walls are in three pieces ; the pyramidal roof in a single piece ; then there is a lining for the whole in two pieces for the walls, and a single piece for the roof. There is also, of course, a strong waterproof cloth for the floor.

The most original and, certainly, the most useful invention about it is, however, the window, which consists of a sheet of the best plate glass I could get in London, three feet six inches long by eighteen inches high, and contained in a mahogany frame. This glass (always framed in mahogany) is kept separately in an oak box,* and only put into its place when the tent is erected. Another mahogany frame is kept fastened to the canvas, and the frame of the window is bolted to the frame on the canvas by copper bolts. The window, so attached, is watertight.

The tent is held to the ground by twenty-four cords and thirty-six pegs.

The worst of it is, that it takes some time to set it up ; but for a *picture*, or even a careful study, this time is sure to be regained tenfold. The reader will please to remember that my object was not to design a *travelling* tent, but

* The box contains also a second window, ready framed, to serve in case of an accident to the first. This precaution is very necessary.

a portable studio intended for prolonged labor in one place. The time spent in erecting the tent is always regained over and over again the first wet or windy day.

I use a stove in the tent in winter.

The size of this tent, eight feet square, makes it possible to paint a picture three feet long, in great comfort, and to have a table for colors at one's side. A much larger picture might be painted, by replacing the central pole by four poles springing from the four corners of the pyramidal roof, and joined together at its apex. It is possible to paint a picture four or five feet long in this tent, and from nature, in the coldest winter weather, or the windiest time of the raw early spring, as comfortably as if the painter were in a well-lighted closet at home, of the same dimensions as the tent. I freely admit that greater space would be pleasanter, but is it not something to have conquered that terrible enemy, bad weather? The painter who possesses such a tent need concern himself very little about interruptions which are fatal to the excellence of work that is attempted without shelter. Cold blast and pelting rain cannot disturb him. On the wild moorland he lays his tenderest films of color, in the midst of its pitiless storms; and neither the rage of the wind nor the fury of the rain, can spoil the perfect delicacy of his faintest hue, nor the grace of his lightest line.*

The tent being pitched with the help of two men, and firmly established in the chosen place, with its plate-glass windows looking towards the mountain, the next thing to be done is to provide one's self with preparatory memoranda.

If the spot is a long way from an inn, it is better for the painter to live in his tent, and have another smaller tent at hand for his servant; but if an inn or farm-house is conveniently near, why let him live there by all means, if he likes, only he must take care to lock up his plate-glass window in his box every night.

* The cost of this tent, with windows, frames, box, &c., complete, was a little under thirty pounds. It is worth the money to any landscape painter who works from nature, and will pay for itself in the first year.

The preparatory memoranda will consist first of a laborious study of form in ink, *the full size of the intended picture*. In order to get this study of form completed, a good deal of watchfulness is required, especially in these Highlands of Scotland, on account of clouds and mists. If the painter is lucky in his weather, he may, however, get this study of form finished in a few days, with hard labor.

During all this time, he must be on the lookout for a noble effect, and if a suitable effect does not occur, he must wait till it does, before touching color. In the Highlands, one has never to wait long for a good effect; the waiting is generally for the form study.

If there is any waiting to be done, and the weather is good enough for sketching, the painter ought to occupy himself in getting together as many memoranda as he possibly can of every thing in the neighborhood of his tent. He will be glad to have them some day, far away.

If it does nothing but rain, and there is no chance even of sketching outside, it may still be possible to get a colored foreground study through the window; and this is the best possible time to get such a study, because the color of foregrounds is always richest in rain. But, lest the weather should be too bad even for *that*, it is as well to be provided with a box of books and a canister of the best procurable tobacco. As for me, on such occasions, I scribble in pencil in a note-book, which scribblings, copied out afterwards, so as to be legible enough for the printers to read, have in the course of years accumulated to these two volumes.

The effect will come at last, and as it is sure to remain only a minute or so, at the longest, we must have every thing quite ready to seize it. The pencil memorandum is to be got as rapidly as possible, the artist drawing at his very utmost speed, and scribbling the sketch all over with letters, according to some such plan as that detailed in the chapter on Painting from Memoranda.

Once in possession of this memorandum, whilst the impression is yet quite vivid, the painter ought, before doing

any thing else, to realize the effect in water-color, or pastel, or in oil if his picture is to be in oil, trying very hard for the true color, but giving only just so much form as is necessary to the expression of the effect.

Then let him note the time of day. In the chosen effect, were there any shadows on the mountain, — shadows, I mean, not of clouds on the mountain, but of the mountain's own bosses and protuberances on its own sides? If there were such shadows, he ought to prepare beforehand a careful small study of the mountain's principal forms, in indelible brown ink, and the next day, at the precise hour and minute when the chosen effect occurred, he ought, on the study so prepared, to copy very rapidly, but as truly as possible in the time, with a brush full of sepia or any other water color he pleases, the exact shape of every shadow he sees, and very queer unaccountable shapes he will find them.

Thus, we have to make first a careful drawing of form, the full size of the picture; then a small memorandum of effect in pencil and short-hand, which we translate into color immediately; then, after that, a study of the forms of shadows. Once in possession of these memoranda, we are no longer strictly bound down to what we see before us, and may begin our picture with a certain degree of independence of Nature's changefulness. We work, however, with cautious and continual *reference* to the actual scene.

Painters who are not much accustomed to paint mountains from nature are invariably defeated by the subtlety of the natural lines; the extreme refinement of form, so different from the vulgar exaggerations of merely popular artists, the infinity of detail, and the impenetrable mystery which veils it all as with enchantment. Add to these difficulties the tremendous one of Nature's *changefulness*. Every day she offers some new effect to the student; some days she offers two or three hundred, any one of which, in its glorious and august presence, seems to him more noble and more worthy to be painted than the one he has already selected. The temptations of the new effects are to be-

ginnings quite irresistible. They alter their work to suit some effect seen more recently, and so ruin it. As for the recent effect being grander than the one first chosen, it is generally a mere delusion, for the comparison instituted by the painter cannot really be *between the two effects*, as they occurred in nature, but between his strong and vivid recollection of the effect of to-day, and his worn-out impression of the effect he saw a fortnight ago; and no wonder, if after a comparison of this kind, the most recent effect should appear the most noble and beautiful. An experienced workman makes his choice of effect very carefully, but once chosen he abides by it, and relies upon it, nor can all the enchantments of subsequent splendor turn him one instant from his purpose. A good way to guard one's self against this besetting temptation of recent effects is, to make memoranda of them all as they occur, even though it may interrupt the progress of the picture. These memoranda will always be valuable, and they serve to allay the instinctive desire to represent every thing that moves and excites us.

The impenetrable mystery of nature is a great cause of defeat to young artists who, even when they have skill enough to draw firmly and accurately, can so rarely attain that wonderful evanescence of execution which represents just so much of objects as we see of them in nature *and no more*. No object is ever well drawn that is completely drawn, nor can any picture ever have the look of reality in which details, however numerous, are all brought out with perfect definition. It does not signify how much work there may be in a picture, where every detail is thoroughly defined it will always look poor; and a rapid sketch by a real artist, if only mysterious enough, will have more power over the mind, and recall more mightily the infinity of nature, than any quantity of perfectly definite labor. Now the difficulty of rendering the mystery of nature is intimately associated with the other difficulty occasioned by her changefulness. She generally defines *something*; some fragment of the outline of an object comes out clearly for a moment, whilst a great part of

the same outline lies in various degrees of semi-definition, and the rest of it is untraceable altogether. This for perhaps two seconds, but the third second the very part of the outline which was untraceable may have become the clearest and most definite, the part that was definite at first being now quite vague or perhaps entirely invisible. Such changes occur incessantly in every detail of a great mountain's front, even in the serenest weather. Any attempt to paint such a detail by mere ocular copyism must therefore be futile, for a touch cannot be laid before it will become falsified by these minute changes; changes by ordinary eyes unnoticed and uncared for, but which cannot long be ignored by any practical student.

The extreme refinement of form in natural landscape is a point so little understood by the public, and by the painters of portrait and genre who exercise authority in the artistic profession, that I hardly like to mention it here at all. The impression amongst figure painters that landscape is easy to draw, and the readiness with which, on the authority of figure painters, the world has accepted the doctrine, make it painfully evident that all these good people have never really looked at natural landscape at all nor attempted seriously to copy it. Now, landscape is not merely difficult to draw, but it is *infinitely* difficult; that is to say, that the best designer of the figure now alive upon the earth, whoever that may be, if he really set himself in earnest to draw a mountain *as it is*, would find, after any quantity of labor and care, that he had only been able to draw it in a manner which is to be called good out of indulgence for the weakness of human faculties, and in a certain restricted sense, and that the natural mountain still remained at quite an infinite and unapproachable distance beyond him. As for the slight sketches of mountains which figure painters are accustomed to put behind their personages by way of background, they bear precisely the same relation to real mountain painting that the figures we landscape painters sketch in our compositions do to real figure painting. Recently, two more serious attempts at mountain painting have been made by figure painters,

and it is significant that these two should be the most refined draughtsmen of their time. John Lewis attempted a mountain in the background to his *Frank Encampment*, and Holman Hunt set up a tent on the shore of the Dead Sea with the resolution to try a range of mountains in good earnest. I appeal to these two figure painters whether mountains are easy to paint or not, and whether their lines are subtle and refined or simple and rude? I am quite willing to grant you that mountains are simple as Claude painted them,—four straight lines variously inclined, inclosing a space of flat gray paint; and I readily admit that they are rude as Salvator rendered them,—mere heaps of formless mud and stone. But mountains in nature are full of exquisite and refined *form*, needing most masterly skill in drawing for even an approximate rendering, such skill as only three or four men now alive possess,—such skill as the rest of us may only humbly labor for and aspire to. How shall we follow the lines of their innumerable streams? how render the roundings of their infinitely various surfaces, the delicate moulding of the swelling forms between the streams, the projections of the descending slopes throwing all the sculpture of the great mountain front into intricate fore-shortening, full of difficult perspective? Mountains easy to paint indeed! If they are so *very* easy, how does it happen that only one or two artists have ever managed to paint them in even an endurable manner? The very best of us can but give a sort of abstract of mountain. No man ever really drew a mountain front in its infinite fulness, and no man ever will draw one, for such work is beyond all human power. The most masterly mountain painting in the world is nothing but a well-selected abstract and abridgment, choosing the most expressive lines, but not rendering one line out of ten. And in those lines that we do render how are we to approach the ineffable tenderness and subtlety of nature? What the coarseness of our faculties exaggerates into strong curves are often so slightly different from straight lines that nothing but the photograph can render them without either omitting the curve altogether or de-

stroying its perfect delicacy by exaggeration. And is not the habit of exaggeration just as often a sign of mere bluntness and coarseness as of noble emotion? We may exaggerate because we feel strongly, but I fear we far oftener exaggerate because we do *not* feel delicately. Perfect drawing, like perfect cookery, or perfect rowing, or riding, or sailing, or indeed, so far as I know any thing else that men do, becomes in its latest advance an exceedingly delicate business, dealing with subtle distinctions which the untrained faculties cannot perceive at all. For the perfectly trained man, however strong he may be, is also much refined by his training, and in his strongest exercise of power is full of grace and gentleness and self-restraint, only untrained and inexperienced hands using violence. And the more refined the skill of the draughtsman the less he will need exaggeration, owing to his habitual self-government and moderation, from which the slightest departure is at once recognized as the sign of overpowering emotion. It is like the writing of a great master in words, who will express himself strongly rather by the exact and *adhesive** fitness of his words to the occasion than by their violence; or like the hostility of a perfectly refined lady, who will inflict acute torture in the gentlest phrases, whereas her sisters in Billingsgate, coarser but not so cruel, are obliged to seek the most sounding epithets.

Of all exaggeration in landscape-painting the commonest is exaggeration of height in high objects, and consequently of steepness in their sloping lines. This is universal with all landscape painters, and I believe the landscape painter never lived who did not habitually exaggerate height and steepness. But no one ever exaggerates the length of a horizontal line. If, for instance, a mountain to be true ought to be two feet high and six feet long in a large picture, the chances are that a painter will make it about three feet high and five feet long. Turner exaggerated

* In good joiner's work the strength consists very much in exquisitely true *fitting*. If a piece of wood is perfectly fitted to its place it is easy to make it stick there without using violence, and so if a word is well fitted it will stick also and for ever.

in this way habitually; but I know of no instance in which he exaggerated the proportionate length of a horizontal line. Our most rigid topographical painters may ultimately, if they work in entire submission to photography, and with its continual guidance, come to produce unexaggerated work; but if ever such work shall be exhibited nobody will believe it to be true, because it will fail to give the *impression* of steepness and height that nature produces on her own scale, with exactly the same lines. I have occasionally, for an especial purpose, made rigidly unexaggerated topographical drawings; but they always look so flat and tame that people intimately acquainted with the scenery never know what they are intended for, and I have always to *prove* their truth by a comparison with photographs of the same places taken by myself. Now, it is evident that as a painter cannot always be at hand with a portfolio of photographs to defend, in hours of reasoning, the literal exactness of accurate work, such work, in his absence, must continually be slighted as feeble, and even condemned as unfaithful. And my usual work, in comparison with the work of many other landscape painters, may be wanting in that peculiar kind of vigor which is attainable by making sloping lines vertical, yet I know now by strict measurement that it is full of demonstrable exaggerations.

If landscape painters painted on thin sheets of vulcanized india-rubber, instead of canvas, their pictures might be made tolerably true by a simple process. It would then only be necessary to stretch the india-rubber sheet horizontally, and the drawing would come, in a rude way, nearly right. Some painters would need more stretching than others, but even Mr. Newton, the truest painter of Highland landscape who ever lived, would need a *little* stretching. His noble "mountain gloom in Glen Coe" shortens the horizontal length of the rocky mass in the middle distance, and so exaggerates its vertical height.

You will, however, constantly find that there is a notable difference between the exaggerations of true men and false. When a true artist exaggerates, it is not from

coarseness of perception, but strength of enthusiasm, whereas the false one exaggerates one fact merely because he is blind to all the rest. In mountain drawing, in addition to the exaggeration of height and steepness already mentioned, bad painters always exaggerate ruggedness, and always curvature; whereas good ones, though they usually exaggerate *height*, because they are forced to do so, in order to produce the impression they desire, rarely exaggerate curves and projections with any thing like violence, because they perceive and relish the reserve and delicacy of nature. The reader would understand this at once if he had the opportunity of comparing one of Turner's mountains with any specimen of mountain drawing by our third-rate water-color men.*

If I can judge of the progress of others by my own, I should say that one of the clearest signs of advancement in drawing is a steady increase in refinement of line and consequent moderation, and that the best proof of progress in color is an increasing relish for slight gradations and faint reliefs, and quiet harmonies.†

The supreme difficulty in painting from nature is to know what to take and what to leave, how far to follow

* If the reader cares to follow out the subject of exaggeration as it affects our popular types of figure painting, he will find, on comparing what are considered good Academy studies with photographs of the same models, that figure painters have a constant habit of exaggeration in the *volume* of muscle, and that they mark all projections too violently on the human form, just as the landscape painters do on the mountains. This makes photographs of the naked figure look thin and ridiculous, for none but the best made persons look very classical without their clothes. Yet the photograph is nearly true to the actual form (not *quite*, for several reasons too long to be explained here), and the common Academy study is a bastard ideal made up of the model, much exaggerated, together with confused reminiscences of Raphael and the Greeks.

† I have a valuable illustration of this, in four of my own drawings of Glen Stræ, made at long intervals during ten years. The first is violently exaggerated, the second considerably less, the third is just exaggerated enough to *look* quite right, and the fourth, being done when I had become conscious of the habit of exaggeration, and was striving against it, so true as to seem false, — that is, the reverse of exaggerated.

To complete the series I took a photograph of the same subject, which proved that the last drawing was nearly true, but still exaggerated; whilst the exaggeration in the earlier drawings was altogether outrageous.

nature, how to select the most essential and mutually helpful truths. We *cannot* have all the truths, do what we will.

How far are we to be slaves to the subject, and when are we to act in something like independence of it?

All painting from nature includes a great deal of painting from memory, and this is even rendered more difficult out of doors than in the studio, by the presence of other and embarrassing facts which it costs us a great effort to reject. It is true, for example, that in painting our mountain from nature we have to color from nature, but in quite a peculiar sense, not in the way of simple imitation, and matching of particular tints. The color of the mountain never continuing the same for a single hour, how is it possible to match its hues? If you match them for a few square inches of your picture to-day, and match the other hues for a few square inches to-morrow, what good will come of it? Will not the harmony of your picture be utterly and irretrievably ruined, and the whole work be quite false and monstrous? Then why are you to color from nature at all if you may not match the natural tints you see? Why not paint such pictures entirely in the studio? The answer is, that you are to paint from nature in order to avoid falsity, and that you may have the opportunity of always referring to nature for any fact you find it necessary to ascertain. Now, many facts of local color may be ascertained through and in spite of the intervening veil of transient color. For instance, in painting a Highland hill in late autumn, you may always ascertain (when the weather will allow of your seeing it at all) where the patches of red fern are, and what is their shape, a thing not easy to invent rightly in a studio; and of the trees in the forest on the mountain's flank, you may see with great precision how far they are reddened by the death of their leaves. But if you merely try to imitate the mountain as you see it, not taking the trouble to use your intellect as well as your eyes, your picture, though painted from nature, will be as false and discordant as if it had been painted in the dingiest studio in Newman Street.

So that self-reliance is one of the first lessons a young artist has to learn, in working directly from nature. He is to get all he can from the natural scene, but to be thoroughly independent of it, and only submit to its guidance just so far as may assist the truth of his work. All slavish, Chinese imitation of separate bits is death and destruction to the whole picture. Nor must any reader misunderstand the reason for this most essential of all principles. The object of every artist who takes his canvass out of doors is to get more truth. It is true that Nature offers us a continual feast, yet it would argue but a slight appreciation of the delicacy of her banquet if we were to mingle all her most exquisite dishes into one abominable mess. We are not to mix together discordant and contradictory truths, and mere ocular imitation is sure to do so. What there is of simple imitation in good painting from nature is really very slight, for it is modified first by constant obedience to the memory, *often in direct opposition to the facts immediately before our eyes*; and farther, it is overruled by the necessity of compromise in all translation of nature into art, a necessity occasioned by the difference in point of light between flake white and the sun, and the difference in point of depth between ivory black in broad daylight and the intense vacuity of natural darkness. None but very simple people ever imagine that the most accurate work from nature is to be accomplished without very great reliance on the memory and considerable effort of the intellect. It requires, no doubt, great delicacy of hand and infinite clearness of vision, but it requires, in addition to these, much of that strength of memory, and all that knowledge of the resources of art, which are essential to the painter who works exclusively in the studio. Hence, the very curious and interesting truth, that a painter who can produce a good picture in a studio from slight memoranda is more likely to paint well from nature than one who has never done any thing else, because he has acquired the habit of self-reliance, and can hold straight on his own path without being allured away from it by the attractions of the ever-changing subject.

The artist who paints from nature must be content to produce little, if he cares for accuracy. Watch a careful painter at work, and you will find his time incessantly divided between two distinct acts,—looking at nature, and putting down what he has seen. First, the retina must receive a strong impression, and then, whilst this remains quite vivid in the memory, it must be got into color. *But this looking at nature occupies as much time as the actual work of painting.* An artist, therefore, who works directly from nature, in the pre-Raphaelite manner, must spend twice as much time on his picture as if he did it from memory and invention in the Turnerian manner. When we take the nature of the two procedures into consideration, there is nothing surprising in this difference.

And it needs hard looking to see the subtlety of a natural line. The difference between the active looking of a highly-trained painter at work from nature, and the mere passive, indolent looking of the people who presume to judge of his work, is something quite wonderful. *It is at least as great as the difference of muscular exertion between a trained Cambridge rower pulling at speed in an eight-oar, and a lady lolling in her carriage.* It is this difference between active and passive looking which accounts for so much ignorance of the commonest natural phenomena on the part of people who live constantly in their very presence. Of all the boatmen on the French rivers, how many do you think would recognize the truth of Turner's river painting? Of all the farmers and peasants in the Highlands, or in Switzerland, how many are competent judges of mountain drawing? These good people have the facts before their eyes every day, and all day long; but they only look at them passively, not actively; and so they never see them at all. Of course, the landscape painter himself looks at very many things quite passively also. Put a landscape painter and any lady of ordinary powers of observation into a ball-room, and it is probable that the landscape painter would only passively receive a most confused impression of a great quantity of

muslin, and lace, and jewelry ; whereas, the lady, unless quite exceptionally indifferent to such matters, would look at it all actively, and, by the time the ball was over, be able to describe with wonderful accuracy and minuteness the dress and ornaments of half the ladies there. The fact is, we all look actively at things which interest us, but only from the point of view of our especial interest, and the impressions we receive are determined for us by our mental state. A general, examining a country where he will have to conduct the operations of war, receives an impression very different from that which he, the very same individual, would have received if he had been trained as a landscape painter, and had visited the same country for purposes of study. And even without pre-supposing the great difference which a different training would have produced, take a man as he is, and if that man is large-minded enough to be able to see a thing from two points of view, what he will see will depend entirely on the state of mind in which he may happen to be at the time of looking. If a painter has property, and is competent to take care of it, you may be quite sure that such artistic picturesqueness as depends upon the ruinous condition of buildings will give him little satisfaction *on his own estate*, it being generally pleasanter to contemplate ruin on other people's property than on one's own. When looking over the condition of his buildings, you may rely upon it that such a painter, however strong his love of good artistic material, would rather find them hideously ugly and in excellent repair than ruinously pretty and picturesque, and that a few acres of wretched-looking building-land in the middle of a great manufacturing town, all black with ashes and trodden into hideous foulness of formless mire, would give more pleasure to his eye as *proprietor* than a purple expanse of the loveliest heather in the Highlands. And, therefore, in looking over his property, it is probable that a painter would not *see* even such elements of the picturesque as it might possess ; for since the picturesque is generally a sign of want of repair, its delightful or artistic aspect is hardly ever visible to the eyes of the

proprietor. In exactly the same way a painter who had a yacht would not like her to be picturesque, but neat, smart, orderly, and swift; leaving the picturesque of sailing to poor fishermen and such like, whose glorious, but dirty and uncomfortable craft he would admire with all sincerity, and paint with perfect love and delight. And if by accident, or neglect, something about his own yacht were to assume a slightly picturesque aspect, the owner, though a painter, would probably not *see* it, but only be angry with it as a gardener is with some lovely wild plant that he tears up and throws on a dung-hill because it is called a "weed."

From these considerations it follows that, since artistic looking is an active operation, we ought to do it energetically. The way to paint successfully from nature is to apply great will and energy to the work. Resolute active attention is wanted; not merely passive attention. For, unless the attention can be strongly concentrated on the subject, all truthful painting is hopeless. In drawing and painting from nature, nothing is to be done with a wandering mind. The work requires vigorous application, or it is sure to be untrue. First, hard *looking* before every stroke; then, stern effort of memory to retain the impression whilst we are transposing it to the key of the picture. The necessity for this transposition doubles the intellectual labor of the painter. In painting mountains from nature, it so very rarely happens that the color of the mountain, as we see it whilst we paint, is the same as it was when we decided on the effect, that an entire transposition of every detail from one key into another is a matter of continual necessity. Add to this the farther translation of the transposed passage from the full and perfect tones of nature into the fractional tones of art, and you have a pretty piece of work to do with the eye and brain before any true stroke can be laid by the hand. The consequence of all this is, that painting from nature is very tiring, and cannot be long continued without rest, if it is to be done really well. As soon as ever the mind and eye become in the least fatigued, and cease to operate

with perfect vigor, it is time to give up, or the work will be spoiled. Four hard hours a day with a rest after each hour are as much as a painter ought generally to paint from nature, unless he is unusually strong. The rest of his day may be employed in free sketching, or quiet observation of natural facts, noting them down in a memorandum-book.

A curious result in popular criticism of the difference between active and passive looking is, that the critic, who looks passively, finds fault with the painter who looks actively. I have heard such critics declare that no detail was to be seen in nature, and thence deduce the conclusion that painters ought not to paint detail. But the true painter does not paint what an unobservant spectator sees, but *what he sees himself*, which is altogether a different matter. I can very well believe that to people who never really look at nature, no details are visible: I also believe that the broadest effects of light, and the most obvious facts of form, are never seen by them; but I repudiate the doctrine that a painter is to regulate his expression of natural truth by a reference to the degree of information on the subject possessed by people who have not yet learned the use of their eyes. To such critics, I always feel tempted to say (if politeness did not forbid such excessive candor), "You are not to elevate your own powers into a standard of human attainment, nor are you to be angry with painters because they see farther into nature than you can. This kind of seeing comes of such hard labor as you have never given; and you are not to criticise the report of the seer, but to accept from it so much instruction as your limited preparatory education will enable you to receive." This sort of answer would probably not tend to keep the said critics in a good humor; but just imagine how absurd and unreasonable we should all think it to restrain the *other* revelators of natural truths to the revelation of such truths only as are already perfectly familiar to all mankind! When the function of the painter shall be rather better understood, let us hope that this imbecile doctrine, that he has no right to see deeper

and know more than other people, will die, like its sister doctrines, that have so long retarded the advance of science; let us even hope that the world will ultimately perceive that the especial duty and function of the artist is precisely to see farther than the rest of mankind, and to lead the eyes of all men to the deepest truths of nature.

It is needless to state here that no landscape can be painted from nature on such a scale, or with such a degree of finish, as would demand more than a very few weeks for its completion. The changes in local color produced by the continual advance or decline of vegetation are so incessant and so great, that to paint longer than three or four weeks on one canvas, would generally involve the registering of inconsistent and contradictory facts, and consequently destroy the truth of the work. In the depth of winter, however, a longer time may be given; and with a tent like mine, it is just as easy to paint from nature in winter as in summer, except that the days are shorter.

With regard to methods of work, every thing depends on the student's own habits. Painters generally work best in the way they are accustomed to, and there are many processes in oil-painting which will yield good results in the hands of those who have practised them. The best and most general counsel I have to offer is, *to rely on opaque color*, separating the work as much as possible into distinct processes, and advancing step by step from great masses to smaller masses till you come to the minutest details, carrying the whole picture steadily on together, and gradually evolving, as it were, the detail out of the mass. This is the safest way; but every artist paints exactly as he pleases, and all true painters hate and scorn fixed rules and methods of execution. And when I say "*rely on opaque color*," I do not pretend to dictate what is legitimate and what not. I advocate opaque color because I am convinced that a steady adherence to it would do more to correct the worst defects of vulgar English execution than any amount of lecturing, and because half our land-

scape painters are ruined by resorting to glazing for effects of transparency and gradation which could be, and ought to be, obtained by fair downright *painting* with solid tints. I know that it is very laborious to work such tints till they look quite right, but it is also exceedingly instructive, and the more so, that they never flatter the artist with a false appearance of success. If he has fairly mastered the subject and *can paint* in the strict sense of the word, it is astonishing how obediently all these stubborn opaque tints will minister to his desire; but in the hands of ignorance and empty pretension they are shockingly frank and outspoken, and cry aloud to the whole world, "This man is *not* our master!"

The use of opaque color forces one to pay great attention to the truth of every tint and to gradation, without which all merely opaque color is quite intolerable, whereas a glaze will often look dangerously pretty and attractive when it is neither true in color nor rightly gradated. I have alluded to the subject of technical work at the conclusion of the chapter on *Painting from Memoranda*. I may say here that the painter of mountains is not to let himself be guided by the practice of figure painters, who deal with objects so near to the spectator, that there is no atmosphere to be represented. Thus, the advice of Rubens, to keep white out of shadows, is to be rejected without hesitation by the painter of mountains, who will generally require white in every shadow he paints, on account of the depth of air between the spectator and all mountain shadows. And one reason why I recommend the painter of mountains to rely upon opaque color is, because it is likely to teach him to paint atmosphere, which, in oil, cannot be got out of transparent color.

Before quitting the subject of painting from nature, I desire to add a few observations on the advantages and dangers of the practice.

The advantages are twofold; some of them belong to the picture, and others to the artist.

A picture which is painted from nature, if well done, is sure to contain many truths which would have escaped the

strongest memory in the studio, unless aided by memoranda as copious in detail as the very picture itself. Such works have, therefore, a peculiar value for their authenticity, independently of their intellectual or artistic value. When strictly topographical, as Seddon's Jerusalem, in the National Gallery, or Brett's Val d'Aosta, they considerably exceed the most perfect photograph in interest and value as records of the scene they represent. The details cannot be quite so accurately drawn as in the photograph, nor so minute, but *there are more of them in the picture*; and, in addition to this, we have the facts of color and atmosphere, which have a great deal to do with our impression of any natural scene, and which it is consequently very desirable to preserve in a record of it.

The advantages of painting from nature are, however, still more striking as they concern the artist himself.

It is not for what he *does*, but for what he *learns*, that the practice is so useful. Whilst he is painting a scene under one effect, he sees it under a thousand, and is incessantly occupied in comparing them. He is always learning something which he did not intend to learn; knowledge of all kinds being brought before him as he sits at work by the inevitable changes of the natural scene. He intends to paint Ben Cruachan in clear weather, and he has not been two days at work before the whole mountain is veiled in a half-transparent mist. If the painter has any sense, instead of being angry at the mist, he will set to work and study it, and learn the laws of evanescence. Round about his tent, in the intervals of painful labor, he will find a thousand objects of interest — beautiful plants and mosses, delightful studies of rock and tree forms — which he may as well sketch whilst he has the opportunity, and about which he consequently learns a great many truths which have nothing to do with the particular picture he is engaged upon, but which will be of the greatest use to his education as a painter. I attach much greater importance to the utility of the new practice of painting from nature as a means of forcing painters to see facts they never would have thought of looking for, than with refer-

ence to the quality of the pictures so produced, which are generally crude, often inconsistent and contradictory, and nearly always wanting in harmony as works of art.

The dangers of painting from nature are more obvious. It undoubtedly weakens the memory and deadens the inventive faculty, and that to such an extent, that if persisted in without frequent alternation with studio work, or unless counteracted by the continual practice of drawing from the memory with the express object of preserving its power, the habit of painting from nature will deprive the artist of that faculty altogether. I have said elsewhere that you cannot even paint from nature without memory ; but in painting from nature the memory is exercised in quite a peculiar manner. It then carries its burden bit by bit, and very little at once, and by short efforts. For painting away from nature the memory requires a totally opposite kind of training. Its business is, then, to carry a whole picture for long together. The vivid recollection of particular bits is of no use when we have no grasp of the whole, because the bits are quite unavailable for our purposes when detached from their natural relations. But the equal and large grasp of whole impressions, even though the details may be by no means accurately retained, is of great use to the artist : and it is this kind of memory which pure painting from nature has such a fatal tendency to debilitate. Of course the intermediate art of painting from memoranda in the presence of nature has not this drawback to any thing like the same extent, and we here approach more nearly to the mental training necessary for those men who work entirely in the studio. But what we gain in one direction we lose in the other ; and when we have to be so entirely independent of the natural scene as to rely upon the memory for half our facts, we lose much of that salutary and severe discipline of eye and hand which is to be derived from the resolute imitation of things that will stay to be studied. Yet I would always advocate the largest training attainable. It seems to me inexpressibly narrow and unreasonable to restrain the practice even of our younger artists to

one kind of work. The simple imitation of nature must precede, but ought by no means to preclude, the exercise of the memory and the practice of painting *as a fine art*, which is absolutely impossible so long as we are held down to the strictly accurate copyism of natural detail. I am perfectly willing to copy with patient fidelity one month, but I may want to paint entirely from memory the next. It is an inexpressible relief to eyes and hands jaded with the wearing toil of mechanical imitation to revel in the happy elysium of the memory, and realize the day dreams of invention; and again, it is often a salutary and refreshing change to turn from this exciting poetry of the art to the brave scientific prose of the most determined imitation. This action and reaction of all large intellects between the real and the ideal, the fact and the dream, is so universally necessary to their healthful life, that they always *will* have it somehow, either in their art or out of it. James Watt refreshed himself with immense doses of fiction, and Shelley braced himself with mathematics. The painter may find the two elements in the practice of his own all-embracing art, and alternate between the labors of observation and the pleasures of memory, to the perplexity of his critics, but with substantial benefit to his own nature, because in obedience to its profoundest laws.

III.

PAINTING FROM MEMORANDA.

WHEN new ways of doing things become fashionable, we are too apt to consider the old ways altogether obsolete. We do not easily see at first that the new method may only be useful for the production of a certain limited order of things, and that the old, instead of being abolished and superseded by the new, may be destined to endure along with it, and live for ever by its side.

When our younger painters first began to finish their works from nature, the greater part of them believed, in their secret hearts, that the art of painting from memoranda in the studio was thenceforth doomed to extinction. They did not perceive that this other art rests on its own grounds, has its own reasons for existing, and is a necessary result of certain causes in nature itself, and in the constitution of man, which causes have lost none of their force because some artists have taken their easels out of doors.

A very praiseworthy act, indeed, it is to take one's easel out of doors; but if we fancy that, by so doing we have altogether abolished the studio, and substituted for it a painting tent, I think we are going a great deal too fast. I hope there is evidence enough, not only in these volumes, but in my pictures themselves, that I have worked laboriously from nature; but at the same time I should be sorry to have it inferred that I do not appreciate the art of painting away from nature, in the studio, and from memoranda. For, as it seems to me, there are a great many very good reasons why the studio ought to be preserved, even by landscape painters, as a valuable old institution which we cannot afford to sacrifice. These reasons I desire to state in detail, and have therefore dedicated the present chapter to the old art of painting from memoranda.

In some essential respects a picture painted from memoranda is likely to be more valuable than one painted directly from nature. It may not be so accurately imitative, but it is likely to be more harmoniously and equally worked out, truer in effect, and better in technical execution. It will also have a higher value as an intellectual product, if the intellect of the artist be of a sufficiently elevated order, to make it desirable that its presence should be visible in his work.

The action of the imagination is more vigorous when the bodily sight is occupied by no real scene. Hence imaginative painters have a well-grounded dislike to painting any thing more than mere studies from nature. For to a great artist the imaginative faculty is the most precious of all his gifts, and he, therefore, instinctively places himself in the conditions most favorable to its free and happy exercise. Those conditions are, first, complete bodily comfort, and, secondly, a certain restriction of space. A good room offers both the comfort and the restriction.

It is needless to point out that, however imaginative a great artist may be, he is also intensely observant. When in the presence of glorious natural scenery, it is not the imaginative part of him which works best, but the observant. All his intellectual power is then concentrated on the faculty of observation for the enrichment of his memory. No one will be surprised at this who has any conception how intensely laborious the act of artistic observation really is. I shall have more to say about it soon, when we come to the cultivation of the memory, the most essential part of the training of a painter from memoranda: for the present, it is enough to affirm that the act of artistic observation is so extremely laborious, as to absorb for the time nearly all the mental energy of the painter, and that in those rare cases where the imagination does really work in the presence of nature, it is because the observant faculty is not developed to its full power and activity.

The painter from memoranda, therefore, divides his labors into two distinct portions. In working from nature, it is his business to observe, note down, and accumulate an

immense miscellany of natural facts. In the painting-room his imagination governs the creation of works of art, in obedience to the laws of nature, and with the help of memoranda taken from nature.

Another reason why the imagination works better when it is shut up between four walls is this: to an imaginative person with a retentive memory, it is extremely desirable that all his ten or twenty thousand impressions should be equally accessible and equally unobtrusive; but in working from nature, the last impression is for a time very obtrusive indeed, and puts all the impressions that remain in the memory into a state of temporary eclipse. This is very disagreeable to an imaginative painter, because he likes to have equal and absolute power over all his accumulated impressions, so as to realize whichever he will, and retain it without interruption from other causes, until it is realized. Now, whatever effect you choose for a picture which you are painting from nature, you may be quite sure that, long before you have finished it, some other effect will present itself whose glorious *presence* will seem to you more worthy to be represented than your fading recollection of the one selected. This kind of interference an imaginative painter instinctively avoids, and when he shuts himself up in a room, it is that he may have all his facts and impressions under perfect control, and protected from the intrusion of other impressions which are quite foreign to the subject he intends to realize.

In all this there is no distrust of, or infidelity towards, nature, but the reverse. There is an acute consciousness on the part of the artist of his own too great sensitiveness to new impressions, against which he instinctively protects himself by opaque walls of masonry. A picture painted from nature, in the strict sense of copying, tint for tint, exactly what the painter saw, would not be true, but monstrous; for it would consist of unrelated fragments of different effects, associated as unprofitably as leaves taken at random from a hundred volumes and bound together in one. Even in painting from nature, as I have shown on another page, the artist has to remain faithful to some selected

effect, of which he preserves a memorandum, and utterly to refuse and reject all the effects which come after it; so that he does not really copy nature, hue for hue, but paints from a memorandum, or from memory, aided by reference to nature for certain facts. And I also showed, that even these facts have to be *twice transposed* before they can be put into the picture, — once from the passing effect to the one selected, which usually involves a complete change of color, and very frequently even of form; and again from the natural scale of light to the pictorial subdivided scale, another transposition which destroys all chance of real imitation. If to these transpositions you have to add the changes introduced into every particle of the natural scene by the imagination of a truly creative or poetical landscape painter, does it not seem rather doubtful whether there can be any use in his painting from nature at all? Would it not be mere self-deception on his part, to set up a tent on the mountains, under pretext of painting from nature, when every thing he saw had to be transposed three several times before he could make any use of it?

1. From the effect visible at the moment to the one selected when the picture was begun.

2. From the natural scale of light to the pictorial subdivided scale.

3. From the natural order to the imaginative composition.

So that, after all, there is not such a very wide difference between a picture done from nature and one done in the studio, as to the direct copyism of facts. For if you copy facts from nature, without carefully observing at least the two first transpositions, there can be no *truth* in your work; and if you do not, or cannot, add the third, *which revolutionizes the arrangement of every particle*, your picture will have slight value as a work of art. And between a picture painted out of doors, in which all the three transpositions were accomplished throughout in a masterly manner, and another similar picture, done in the studio by the help of abundant memoranda, for the facts to be transposed, I confess I see very little difference in point of authenticity. The superiority in technical execution is

nearly sure to be on the side of the studio picture; and this superiority has great weight with artists, especially with the most accomplished ones.

The reasons why the technical superiority is likely to be found in the studio picture are the physical comfort of a large studio, its perfect preparation of *means* of all kinds, and the absence of hurry caused by the permanence of memoranda in comparison with the transience of nature.

I have so often insisted on the importance of a certain degree of physical comfort for the execution of a delicate work that I fear the reader will infer that I am unusually fond of personal ease, and so attribute my expression of what is in reality a universal truth to my own individual softness of temperament and love of luxury. How far I am alone in this feeling, I therefore invite the reader impartially to consider.

Of all the occupations of men, I can at this moment remember none, not involving some considerable degree of bodily movement and exercise, which the persons devoted to them are in the habit of following without the shelter of some kind of building. Even joiners and blacksmiths, whose muscular exertion is quite sufficient to enable them to resist cold, are in the habit of working in buildings called forges and workshops. And of all the trades followed in a metropolis like London, there is not one which is practiced in the open air when there is the choice of practising it under cover. The reason for this is, that the open air, however pleasant under certain circumstances, — as, for instance, to sportsmen, — is full of an immense variety of small annoyances and interruptions, which so seriously hinder most kinds of labor, that the workers, in self-defence, protect themselves by walls and roofs, and actually find it more profitable in the long run to pay rent for a building to shelter them whilst they work than to work in the open air.

The annoyances I here speak of are all but unknown to sportsmen; but they are very well known to painters. When in vigorous exercise a man will easily resist a degree of inclemency in the weather which would kill him if he

were to take a chair and sit still in it for eight or ten hours every day. I have ridden on horseback and pulled in a boat in every conceivable variety of bad weather without taking the least harm; but I have been laid up for a month in consequence of a few hours' imprudent painting from nature. And of all the premature deaths of landscape painters, I believe that a large percentage might be distinctly traced to the habit of painting or studying in the open air.

It is not, however, as it affects the health and longevity of artists, but the technical perfection of their work, that we have at present to consider the utility of the studio. It tends to technical excellence by protecting the artist from small interruptions and annoyances.

There is no doubt that it is very miserable to human nature generally to be out of doors in a state of compulsory quiescence. There is always something to plague one. Either it is too hot, or it is too cold, or there are flies, or one is on a wasp's nest, or it rains, or the sunshine dazzles one's eyes, or the movement of the water wearies them, or some other such little misery maddens the unfortunate student. I declare no man has any business to paint from nature who cannot bear to be bitten by gnats without wincing. The artist who should allow himself to be disturbed merely because a gnat was regaling itself on his blood would accomplish little. The resolute ones work on in serene calm when sucked by several gnats at once. Practically, however, I confess that there are limits to this endurance, and I never could work delicately under the stimulus of more than six gnats at a time.

Painting in rain and wind needs great courage and patience. I have drawn sometimes in pencil for many hours together in pouring rain, with the water streaming all over my study as it does over the roof of a house; but neither the study nor myself was in any way benefited by the rain. A friend of mine, a resolute painter from nature, tells me that he never allows moderate rain to stop him, even though it falls on the canvass itself. Still, drops of water do no good to a carefully laid surface of

oil-color, and rain is a real hindrance to the art of painting. Then there are the extremes of heat and cold, the burning glare of Oriental suns, the icy blast of a Highland winter, all to be borne patiently, if such subjects are to be painted from nature. There are some sketches and studies which no painter can look at without a sensation of awe at the endurance they prove, like what other people feel when they read of some terrible military retreat or arctic exploratory expedition. Gentlemen who follow painting merely as a polite amusement, and lay it aside whenever it becomes arduous or unpleasant, have little conception of the infinite energy and resolution of mind, and firm bodily endurance, which those men need who have to live by their art and really face its hardships. Against some of these hardships I am happy to think that my studio tent is an effectual protection. Henceforth neither wind nor rain nor frost need vex the landscape painter any more.

But a studio tent, comfortable as it is in comparison with the open air, is very inferior to such a painting room as mine. My tent is eight feet square, and although its pyramidal roof rises to a height of fourteen feet from the ground, its walls rise only to eight feet. But my studio is about twenty-seven feet long, by nineteen wide, and fifteen high. Now the tent will no doubt contain materials for the execution of a small picture, and even, by removing the central pole, a picture six feet long *might* be painted in it, but the space is still very inconveniently restricted in comparison with that afforded by the studio. If I were painting rather a large picture in the tent, I could not get back far enough to see the relations of the masses of color; and although, no doubt, an accomplished artist can, in a great degree, guess at the effect of what he is doing, and paint without having the opportunity of seeing what he is painting, nevertheless, we all like to assure ourselves from time to time that the relative weight of the color in different parts of the picture has been rightly determined. And for practical convenience, in following out the different processes of painting to a successful and

complete result, especially if the work be on a large scale, a great deal of space is extremely desirable. I find my studio, spacious as it is, only just large enough; and if ever I build one on ground of my own, it shall be a yard longer and a yard wider. The comfort of a great studio is most conducive to technical excellence. A substantial oak easel, heavy and firm, with a screw to raise and lower the picture without disturbing it, and wheels to move the whole into precisely the best light; a large painting-table, with one or more great drawers, neatly divided with partitions for colors; shelves with every thing that can possibly be wanted at any stage of the work, always at hand, and in perfect order; all these things are helps which no wise man despises, for they make good and beautiful workmanship easier and pleasanter to him. And the absence of hurry in studio work is another great advantage. In painting from nature, you *must* work rapidly, and you cannot well undertake more than one picture at a time. For although it is quite useless to think of painting transient color from nature, we refer to nature for local color, or else, I suppose, there would be no use in painting from nature at all. And the changes in local color occasioned by the ceaseless advance of vegetation are so great, so revolutionary, that it is of little use undertaking any work from nature which will occupy us more than a month. Now a month is not enough for a picture which is solidly painted, if all its processes are to be very carefully followed, with sufficient intervals for drying. At least three months are necessary for the fair construction of an oil-picture in which impasto is employed, if we allow the right time for drying, paint soundly, and do not use perilous driers. Now, in the studio, there is no occasion for any hurry, at all. Your memoranda will be just the same three months hence, and you may as well have three or four pictures going on together, letting each dry as long as is necessary. In the modern way of using opaque color, and obtaining texture by leaving various kinds of surface for the subsequent reception of transparent films, it is frequently necessary that certain parts of the ground-colors

should retain the rough marks of the brush, whilst in other parts these marks must be carefully scraped away, so as to leave a surface as smooth as polished ivory. This scraping, on color not perfectly dry, is quite impossible; and even in the height of summer the thicker parts of a ground-color will take a fortnight to harden enough to be fit for the scraper. Many of these minor artifices, which contribute so much to the effect of a picture, have to be omitted in work done directly from nature; and hence the common assertion of French critics like Ferdinand de Lasteyrie, that we English do not understand the technical art of painting,—an accusation for which there is this degree of foundation, that in our works from nature we are often obliged to neglect a variety of useful and cunning little expedients which lend a great charm to the best studio pictures. And it does, indeed, seem very possible that in a school like ours, where the custom of working from nature is extremely prevalent, the artist *craft* is in some danger of being neglected and lost for mere want of the leisure and convenience necessary to its elaborate exercise. There is a continual temptation, in working from nature, to abridge the orderly succession of processes, and do too much at a time. No doubt a very accomplished artist may, if he pleases, finish a few square inches of his picture when he has the chance of doing it from nature—I mean, when the effect of the moment in some degree resembles the effect originally selected for the work—but it is extremely dangerous for all ordinary painters to yield to any such temptation. For *them* there is no safety but in the orderly and calm division of the business to be done.

Memoranda for pictures may be accumulated in two ways. Either the artist accumulates memoranda of natural facts and phenomena with no other intention than to provide himself with a kind of encyclopædia for general reference, or he goes to nature with the direct intention of obtaining memoranda for a particular picture. The first method has the advantage of keeping his attention so continually alive, that no natural fact can possibly come

amiss to him; and an artist of this universally accumulative character, although his particular works may not present any striking imitative truth, is sure to know a great deal more about nature than artists who work only with reference to some picture they have resolved to paint. This was Turner's way of accumulating memoranda, and no doubt a very good way it is, but it has a defect which I must here indicate.

The evil of it is, that although your memoranda may be in the aggregate very voluminous, they rarely afford, when taken in this desultory manner, *all* the information you desire when you come to consult them with reference to some particular work. They fail to inform you about some fact which you find to be indispensably necessary; and the want of authentic information on such points tends to a general weakness of statement in your whole picture; for although you may state some facts with perfect certainty, you feel so uncertain about others that you dare not enter very far into detail anywhere. I believe that this simple consideration explains the vagueness of assertion so common in Turner's foregrounds. It may be possible in one or two of his more carefully studied foregrounds to discover a few plants and leaves about which there is something approaching to a definite though still very mannered statement; and a critic whose object was to exalt Turner, and not to teach truth, might, no doubt, from the immense mass of his works, point to a few such details as a proof that Turner's observation extended to them; but the real fact is, that Turner hardly ever painted either trees or foregrounds in any but the shallowest manner, all his interest being concentrated in the distance, and in effects of atmosphere and water. Leslie's criticism, "I look in vain for a specific discrimination in his trees, or in the vegetation of his foregrounds," is perfectly well founded, Turner's vegetation being generally weak and unmeaning; nor would it be possible out of the innumerable works he left behind him to extract any thing like a complete illustration of the principal English and French trees, though he devoted two

distinct series of works to the scenery of England and France. The reasons for this weakness appear to have been, first, his youthful deference to elder masters, who lived in days when landscape was considered so far beneath the attention of a true student that trees were not thought to be worthy of serious study, and were seldom specifically rendered; and, secondly, his own system of memoranda, which was better fitted for dealing with sudden effects of light than the elaborate details of botanical structure. In considering his system of memoranda, we are therefore to bear in mind that it was invented and employed by a painter whose great object was to paint remote distances, and to whom foreground detail was a matter of secondary importance; and we are only to imitate it so far as we ourselves attempt to deal with effects in the sky and distance.

So far as I have been able to examine Turner's memoranda, I should say that those of the sky are nearly all that it was possible to obtain in the time, whilst the memoranda of mountains and trees were generally much slighter than they might have been if the painter had cared to have them elaborate. Being, however, accustomed to charge his memory with infinite details of cloud structure, it is natural that Turner should have relied upon it for every thing else to the same extent. Still I see no reason why we should not get abundant memoranda of things that will stay to be studied, merely because we are forced to content ourselves with slight notes of transient things; and I look upon Turner's whole system as rather a result of habit than reflection. As a painter pre-eminently of skies and distances, he had acquired the habit of working almost entirely from memory, aided by the very slightest notes, and he carried the same habit into the foreground. In deliberately reasoning out a system of memoranda, we are, however, to remember that we are not all of us Turners, and cannot, like him, get weak foregrounds forgiven for the sake of glorious skies and illimitable distances.

Thus of the memoranda by Turner, given in the fourth chapter of the fifth volume of "*Modern Painters*," the

slight notes of a sunrise at page 187 (first edition) are nearly all that could have been obtained in the time; whereas the sketch of Lausanne, opposite page 189, is merely the jotting down of an idea, not by any means a study of the place. All this was perfectly right for Turner; and the longer I live the more I perceive that every artist finds out the natural expression of his own talent; and that all the assertions of critics that artists ought to have done this thing or that, which they did not do, are quite idle and illusory. Nevertheless, another artist who is *not* Turner will find it no advantage to him to imitate Turner's way of study, which was adapted only to his peculiar genius; and I desire to point out the bad consequences in Turner's own work of the extreme slightness of his foreground memoranda. Either his memory was not strong enough to carry the specific characteristics of the different kinds of trees and plants, or he despised these orders of truths and rejected them on system. It is probable that his peculiar genius felt little attraction to the truths he habitually neglected; but if we desire to represent those truths we cannot content ourselves with memoranda as slight as his, since his pictures in this respect afford so little encouragement to a reliance on the memory.

In speaking of Turner's memoranda of skies, I said that they were *nearly* all that could be got in the time. They are all that can be got in the way of form, which, unfortunately, is always very little indeed; but I think a closer and more accurate notation of *color* might be attempted with advantage, and I have myself elaborated such a system, which I find practically not more cumbersome than Turner's, quite as rapid, and more likely to be generally useful. Thus, for instance, in the notes of a sunrise given by Mr. Ruskin, it was a great waste of time to write the words "yellow," "red," "cold," "purple," and "gray" in full, because the colors might have been far more accurately indicated, and in the same space of time, by carefully invented signs. Turner, however, relied always very much upon his memory and invention; he

even relied upon them *too* much, as strong men usually trust their constitutions too far. And, therefore, Turner's object in taking a memorandum was probably nothing more than this, to direct him to that particular little corner of his immense storehouse, where the whole scene was sure to be found whenever he might have occasion for it. And if this were so, it was unnecessary for Turner to attempt any discrimination as to the *sort* of "red," "yellow," "purple," &c., which he saw about the sun, because the exact tints would be easily found whenever he chose to look for them in his own mind.

I do not say that this *was* so quite to this extent. Turner's invention was inexhaustible, but there is no real evidence that his memory was very accurately retentive. His habit of altering every thing that he drew makes it exceedingly difficult to convict him of definite error in a matter requiring an effort of the memory, because if very incorrect drawings of his were produced to prove that his memory was not infallible, Mr. Ruskin would immediately reply with his ingenious theory of Turnerian topography, which was devised to meet all such emergencies. His memory may have been very accurate, but there is really no evidence of the fact; for although he often drew from memory, he never drew any thing accurately. I myself *do not believe* that Turner's memory was not capable of carrying much more than the mere suggestions of his inventions; and I think that it was a matter of comparatively little consequence to Turner what the precise tint of red or yellow about the sun may have been on that particular morning, seeing that in any picture, where the fact might afterwards be stated, he would certainly modify those hues with a true composer's sense of their relation to all the other hues in every other part of his picture.

In arranging any complete system of memoranda, we are, therefore, to know what it is that we propose to ourselves, how far we intend to imitate nature, and how far to rely upon the memory. It is possible to obtain memoranda so full of information that a picture painted from them will look as if it were painted directly from nature.

It is, of course, also possible to take memoranda so exceedingly slight that they will convey no more than a mere suggestion, and leave the filling up of every detail to the memory and invention of the painter. Between these two extremes of fulness and slightness lie an infinite variety of systems; every painter who works much in the studio having a way of gathering his materials in some degree peculiar to himself.

In offering a detailed explanation of my own system of memoranda, I wish the reader to observe that it is adapted to my own wants, and would probably have to be modified before it could be as useful to any other artist. Still it is more likely to be of general use than Turner's plan, which relied entirely upon invention, and which, therefore, can be of little use to painters who have no invention to rely upon.

Memoranda may be made to serve a double purpose, the education of the artist and the collecting of materials for pictures. Of the two purposes, the first is never to be lost sight of, and the second ought always to be kept in subordination to it. An artist's first purpose should always be to train himself to perfect power, not to produce this or that agreeable picture. If we want good figs we must look to the fig-tree, not to this or that particular fig. A thoroughly trained artist cannot paint quite worthless pictures unless he accepts some vicious and destructive principles; but a partially trained one will generally ruin really good work by putting some unlucky bit of weak work in the same canvass. When I planned my system of memoranda, I therefore determined that it should include in itself a complete curriculum of study, — a regular, steady training in all the hard work of painting, such as I should put a pupil through who wanted to be a great artist. The consequence of this is, that whenever I go to nature for materials for a picture, I refresh myself with a course of elementary lessons, and so go to school again from time to time, with great advantage to myself, and, consequently, to every picture I paint.

The other and immediate, yet secondary, purpose of

getting materials for particular works has also to be carefully provided for. We are not to set out with the idea that we are great inventors who need only the very slightest hints and suggestions to produce wonderful pictures; but rather to underrate than overestimate our inventive powers, and to trust our memory very little though we train it sternly and steadily. We are to get all the facts that can possibly be got directly from nature. We need not go and paint from memory in the presence of nature; but we must get every fact as elaborately as its own degree of permanence will admit of. We cannot really draw the clouds in a sky, so we must be satisfied with a sketch of their arrangement, aided by shorthand notes for color; but we can draw the principal forms of a mountain with tolerable accuracy, and we are therefore to do so. On the other hand, we cannot get transient color from nature; but we may get a careful study in oil or water-color of *local* color, which we are therefore to try for. The golden rule is to get from nature whatever nature's transience will allow us fairly to obtain.

The secret of success in this is *separation of aim*. It is a bad and lazy plan to try for every thing in the same study. The right way is to take a series of studies each with its own object: one for form, severe and delicate; another for local color, in which all the patches of different hues are carefully mapped out and set down in water-color; a third for light and shade, this one mainly for the *forms of shadows*, a most desirable kind of truth; a fourth for transient form and color, this one being a very hasty pencil memorandum with shorthand notes; a fifth being a rapid attempt to realize the effect in water-color, whilst the impression of it remains quite fresh in the memory. To these five studies a set of half a dozen collodion photographs may be added with advantage, if their exposure is strictly regulated according to the particular kind of detail the artist requires. The photographs are especially useful for reference as to *texture*, which collodion renders perfectly, and which none of the other memoranda can render at all, unless those in water-color, at the cost of

infinite labor. But the collodion photographs do not by any means do away with the necessity for the severe form-study. I cannot stay here to explain why photographs are of little use to landscape painters as records of form; but the reader will find the whole subject investigated in the chapter on the relation of photography to painting.

We have, therefore, arrived at three fundamental principles, which we will recapitulate here to clear up our ideas on the subject.

FIRST PRINCIPLE.

The gathering of the memoranda ought to be so arranged as to constitute in itself a complete course of artistic training.

SECOND PRINCIPLE.

In noting down facts from nature, we are to regulate the degree of elaboration in our notes by the degree of permanence in the thing to be studied, doing our *best* to get the utmost amount of truth possible to us under the circumstances, not sketching permanent things carelessly because we cannot study transient things deliberately.

THIRD PRINCIPLE.

We are to separate our aim as far as possible, giving one study to form, another to local color, a third to light and shade, a fourth to transient form and color, a fifth to realize the impression noted down hastily in the fourth, to all which may be added a set of collodion photographs for information about texture, which there is scarcely time enough to get in the other studies.

To these three principles a fourth may be added with reference to the memory.

We are to cultivate the memory *separately*, subjecting it to a peculiar training of its own; but we are to rely upon it as little as possible in obtaining memoranda from nature, because then our object ought to be the accumulation of

authentic facts. I will endeavor to explain how the memory may best be cultivated when we have done with the subject of memoranda. First let us examine the proposed series of studies, and whilst we are doing so I beg the reader to understand that I am not proposing a *possible* series of memoranda which I have not practically tried; but a series which already exists abundantly in my portfolios, which I habitually repeat when I require materials for a new picture, and which I rely upon for all my largest and most important works.

FIRST STUDY. — FORM.

A careful pen-drawing, *the full size of the intended picture*, and noting firmly every detail of form that can be got without shading. As this is a mere memorandum after all, and not intended to be sold or engraved, or looked at by anybody but the painter, there is no attempt to express distance in it, nor to make it look pretty, nor to subordinate one fact in order to give importance to another. The thing is a plain, downright statement of hard facts of form, not a pretty, plausible drawing. How far it is to be an accurate transcript of the natural scene depends entirely upon the artist. The masses are to be arranged exactly as they will be in the picture. My own practice is to alter as little as I possibly can; and I select only the very best natural compositions, in order that I may be able to make use of nature's own composition without much adaptation to my own purposes. Still, we are not to be illiberally severe on the question of accuracy. The object of the artist is to give as faithful an impression as he can of the *whole* natural scene, and sometimes this is best done by considerably altering the natural arrangement. We are to bear in mind that the natural world was not intended *only* to be painted, but to be inhabited by living men; and the physiological fact that the vertebræ of the neck allow the head to turn from side to side, and that the eyes move in their sockets, is proof enough that men were not intended to look at nature as a militia-man does when the

drill-sergeant gives the word, "Eyes right." Wherefore, since we are intended to look freely around us, and to gather our impressions of natural scenery from every point of the compass, there is really no reason why an artist should not do so too, if his purpose is to convey to us an idea of the place he is illustrating. I think, however, that this form-study ought to contain the whole subject, definitively composed, as we intend it to be in the completed picture; because, any *subsequent* changes in the studio would have to be done without that reference to nature, which is so easy whilst we are making the study. My form-studies of this kind are always definitively arranged, and I do not change so much as a leaf in painting from them afterwards.


I draw these studies in ink, and with Gillott's little lithographic steel pens. I find it takes me a week to do a large one, if I work very hard, but then I draw them very delicately. The continual study of hard form, that this kind of memorandum compels a painter to go through, lays a very valuable foundation for subsequent color work. In studies of this kind, there is no avoiding the form, no easy hiding of mountains in mist, no pleasant avoiding of hard foreground-drawing by dexterous and attractive manipulation. I do not admit either cloud or shadow anywhere in these drawings: when I undertake to draw a mountain, I must do it from foot to crest, every inch of it, no friendly mist being ever allowed to intervene. Then the drawing is to be filled as full of details as it possibly can, every such detail being a clear statement of some fact of form. And all the forms are to be studied as closely as a sculptor studies the most precious curves of a maiden's limbs, the very faintest swellings of the mountain's lines being tenderly imitated by the fine little steel instrument, and exaggerated as little as may be.

Work of this kind is good discipline in forms; but if it were too exclusively followed, we should not become painters, only delicate topographical draughtsmen. For all such work is more definite than nature, and not half mysterious enough. There are a thousand facts which, if stated at

all in such drawing, are sure to be stated too definitely, and still they *must* be stated nevertheless. Hence a young painter who relied too much on memoranda of this kind would end by sacrificing gradation and mystery to a morbid clearness, and, however full of detail his work might be, it would always seem less rich, than slighter work in which gradation and mystery were fully felt and expressed. The perfection of his mere drawing would be of little use in his painting, unless accompanied by other and more subtle qualities, and he would experience the common disappointment of accomplished draughtsmen, who too frequently imagine that, as they can draw better than some painters, and as drawing is the basis of painting, they must also be able to paint better. In affirming the utility of this kind of work, I am bound to add this warning, that if too exclusively persisted in it leads to three great vices: the first, want of gradation; the second, over-definition; the third, want of mystery and infinity.

SECOND STUDY. — LOCAL COLOR.

Generally rather a difficult study to obtain, because the local color has to be seen through, and in spite of the transient color, and noted down in the manner of an abstract. It is a map of the distribution of local color in the picture, and should be done the full size of the form-study. It saves time to trace the principal forms from the first study. The patches of local color should be very carefully mapped out. If you are going to paint an oil-picture, this study ought to be done in oil, using thin *opaque* color laid on like mosaic, in patches fitted carefully together. The whole study may be done in a single process if it is properly managed, but two processes will do it better justice. I learned the importance of this kind of study from the Highland hills, many of which are all patched over with a variegated local coloring of the richest greens and purples, whilst others are covered with a network of fern, which turns to a deep red in autumn. I found that mere careless color-sketching was not enough



for such elaborate designs of local color, and set myself to obtain more complete memoranda of it. Very hideous things these memoranda look when they are finished, having neither light nor shade, nor transient hues, whilst the mapped colors obliterate the beauty of the forms. Still, these studies are extremely useful, and I earnestly recommend the artistic reader not to undervalue them. One is always wanting to learn some fact about local color when painting in a studio. As I have already shown, the principal reason why painters ever work from nature is precisely that they may have the continual opportunity of reference for local color. Form they could get from form-studies: transient color is never to be painted from nature at all; but every artist knows that the one great point of superiority, in pictures done from the scene itself, is the truth and variety of local color. Hence, if we would not have our studio pictures inferior in this respect to pictures done directly from nature, we are to map out local colors with much diligence and care.

THIRD STUDY. — SHADOWS.

The groundwork for this study, — that is, a sketch of forms, — ought to be prepared beforehand, because, when the shadows come, the artist will be in too great a hurry to draw forms correctly. The forms of the objects being accurately drawn, we have a guide to the forms of the shadows, which may thus be put in with the utmost rapidity, and still be tolerably correct. It is not to be expected in a memorandum of this kind that the gradations of the shadows can possibly be followed; they are far too subtle and delicate, and would occupy too much time. The right way is to dash the shapes of the shadows on the prepared form, drawing with a large camel-hair brush full of a pale flat tint of sepia: any more elaborate kind of drawing would be sure to be untrue; because as we are drawing one shadow, all the others are steadily changing, and therefore slow work in such memoranda as these is always false work. Mr. Rowney's indelible brown

ink is useful for the preparatory forms; but pencil does nearly as well. I have often put in the shadows in these memoranda with Rowney's broad lead pencils, which are very fine instruments for such work.

When the shadows are particularly numerous and elaborate, it is a good plan to outline them all very rapidly *first*, and then fill them up to the outlines.

The true shapes of shadows got by these means always add infinitely to the general air of veracity in the completed picture. For shadows are things that no invention can ever guess at when the forms that cast them, and those which they fall upon, are alike full of unknown changes. No one but a tyro ever imagines that he really knows any thing about the form of a mountain, merely because he sees it; and as for guessing the form of a shadow that one mountain will throw upon another, it is impossible, for two reasons, — first, because the spectator knows nothing about the form of the mountain which casts the shadow; and, secondly, because he is equally ignorant of the form of the mountain on which the shadow is cast.

FOURTH STUDY. — TRANSIENT FORM AND COLOR.

It is quite useless to attempt transient form and color with the brush, which can render neither truly in the time. All that is to be got from nature in cloud-drawing is a rapid pencil memorandum of the natural composition, covered all over immediately afterwards with brief shorthand notes of color and light. Whilst these shorthand notes are being added, of course the composition will be rapidly breaking up and running into new forms; but we have secured its main lines, nevertheless, and may add some notes of its principal colors. I have a great number of memoranda of Highland effects of this kind taken at all seasons of the year, and I find the shorthand notes upon them very valuable to me as records of color and light. My system of notation once thoroughly mastered, so as to be always at one's fingers' ends, opens new possibilities of

veracity to the painter of transient effects, but it is rather complicated and elaborate, and needs long practice before it can be used with the necessary readiness. For there is this peculiarity in all memoranda of transient effects, that they must be done in so short a space of time that there is not a second to spare for deliberation. The brain must be ready and in full action, with perfect command of all its means and materials; the hand must be swift and unerring; the eye eager and piercing. To work thus at utmost speed, and make no mistakes in the application of an elaborate set of signs, it is necessary to have used them long. Even I who devised this system found it rather cumbersome and unmanageable until I had employed it at least a hundred times.

I made it, however, as simple as ever I could, and used no mysterious hieroglyphics, but only plain initial letters. Still, as blue and black and brown all begin with a B, I called blue H, the initial letter of heaven, because the sky is blue; and black I marked N, because night is black. Then, again, as green and grey both begin with G, I called green E, because the earth is green; and as rose and red both begin with the letter R, I called rose F, for flower. With these little changes, I found I could represent a considerable number of colors with one letter only for each.

COLORS.

Red,	R.	Gray,	G.
Blue,	H. (heaven).	White,	W.
Yellow,	Y.	Black,	N. (night).
Green,	E. (earth).	Brown,	B.
Purple,	P.	Crimson,	C.
Violet,	V.	Scarlet,	S.
Orange,	O.	Mauve,	M.
Lilac,	L.	Drab,	D.
Rose,	F. (flower).		

But as colors in nature are hardly ever pure, I had to find out some way of writing such a combination as bluish grey, and I represented the syllable *ish* by means of a colon, thus, H : G. Then, as the words "warm" and "cold"

are much used by artists to distinguish tints into two large classes, I invented signs for them thus: warm Δ , cold ∇ . It was easy to remember that warm was something like a Δ and cold the same sign turned upside down.

Then, as all colors in nature are gradated, I required some sign capable of being extended at will over a great surface, without interfering with the other signs, and which might thus indicate gradations either in large spaces or small. For this purpose I finally selected a single dotted line: Since, however, it was absolutely necessary that I should know which end of my gradation was darker than the other, I put a D at the darker end, and an L at the lighter end, thus: —

D L

Again, as the same color would occur in very different degrees of intensity, I required some graduated scale of signs to indicate the degree. I found the following most convenient: —

Yellow	Y.
Strong Yellow	Y.///
Intense Yellow	Y.////
Very intense Yellow	Y.////////

I needed a simple sign for the word “pale,” and another for the word “dark,” because these words are of constant occurrence in memoranda of transient effect. For “pale” I took a small open circle \circ , and for “dark” the same circle filled up \bullet .

Thus $\circ G$ is pale gray, and $\bullet G$ dark gray.

In taking memoranda of skies, every painter must have perceived that their colors are extremely *metallic*; even poets perceive this, and call the sky “golden,” “silvered,” “copper,” “leaden,” and the French poets sometimes call it brazen (*d'airain*). I therefore selected the metals most likely to be useful; but as their initial letters were the same as some already devoted to colors, I wrote each initial letter of the English word in the corresponding small Greek character. It would have been useless pedantry to

take the initials of the Greek words themselves, because I am not in the habit of thinking in Greek. This gave me the following additional signs, which I have since found of great use : —

Silver,	σ .	Bronze,	β .
Gold,	γ .	Aluminium,	α .
Copper,	κ .	Lead,	λ .

The new metal, aluminium, was particularly useful, perhaps the most useful of all, its delicate gray being of constant occurrence in the paler rain-clouds.

Again, as everybody who is in the habit of reading poetry must have remarked that the poets, when they describe the phenomena of the sky, cannot get on at all without precious stones, and as the peculiar transparency of air and semi-transparency of cloud often really do resemble precious stones, I added a series of abbreviations of the most useful stones, thus, taking the first two letters of each : —

Diamond,	Di.	Topaz,	To.
Ruby,	Ru.	Amethyst,	Am.
Emerald,	Em.	Turquoise,	Tu.
Pearl,	Pe.	Coral,	Co.
Sapphire,	Sa.	Opal,	Op.
Chrysoprase,	Ch.	Lapis Lazuli,	La.

These abbreviations are occasionally of great use, though less frequently required than the preceding ones.

We have now got some indication of color and gradation, but in order to make our memorandum really valuable, we require tolerable accurate notes of light and shade.

There is really no time to get these with the brush. It is quite impossible by such means to define the degree in which a light cloud relieves itself against a darker one, before both are transformed, or even to render the delicate differences in light between minute portions of the same cloud's surface. But it is fortunate that, although color can only be noted down in a rude and imperfect manner, degrees of light can, by a practised student, be noted with

accuracy and precision. It is not desirable, for it would be of no use, to note the light of nature as it *is*; we need only set it down as paint is able to represent it. I therefore transpose the scale of Nature's light to my own scale of pictorial light in the memorandum itself.*

You may state light and dark with quite sufficient delicacy by means of numbers. I take 100 as my highest light,—that is, the sun, and the intense splendor immediately surrounding it; with zero for my darkest dark,—that is, a mountain at moonless midnight. All the intermediate numbers represent intermediate degrees of light.

If I had needed more minute distinctions, I might have graduated my light into a thousand degrees, but a hundred were quite sufficient, and the numbers from one to a hundred will express degrees of light with a delicacy and exactness which no combinations of words, however elaborate, could rival. They have also the great advantage of being expressible in *figures*, which are a very perfect kind of shorthand.

In looking over my memoranda, I continually find such distinctions as this: One ridge of mountain is marked 50, another close to it 51; a distinction so extremely delicate that nothing but numbers or art could state it; words certainly could not, and all artistic expression of it would cost too much time. The slightest exaggeration in the light of the second ridge would deprive a third ridge of its relief, and so destroy the truth of the memorandum.

By the help of numbers, the gradation sign gains also in significance.

D L

Here is the gradation without the help of numbers. We know that the color is darkest at our left hand, and lightest at our right; but we do not know whether the gradation is regular or not, nor whether it is strong or faint. Grada-

* The reader will find a full explanation of this difference in scale between natural and pictorial light in the chapter on the Relation between Photography and Painting.

tion in nature is hardly ever regular ; it usually becomes more rapid towards one end of the scale. Let us see how numbers will help us.

40 60 70 80
D L

We see by this that the gradation is much more rapid at our left hand, and that the middle tint is not half-way from the dark to the light, but much nearer the dark.

These figures being written in a very minute hand may be put in all sorts of little places. A mere touch of intense sunshine on a cloud or mountain may be isolated by the pencil-point, and marked with a high figure to indicate the intensity of the light upon it, when the space would be too small to allow of a word being written in it.

My own memoranda of transient effects are covered all over with these signs ; but as it always requires some mental effort to decipher and realize such complicated pages, I find it saves time to translate them into color before painting the effects in studio pictures.

FIFTH STUDY.—TRANSLATION OF THE PENCIL MEMORANDUM.

I am so much more accustomed to oil than to water-color, that I myself prefer translating the pencil memorandum into oil ; but I think the wisest way is always to translate it, on its own scale, into the material in which the picture is to be painted. If it is a water-color drawing that you are going to do, your memorandum ought to be translated into water-color ; but if for an oil picture, I think it should be done in oil. The reason for this is, that the very same natural color is rendered quite differently in the two media, and there is always some degree of uncertainty and confusion in translating a tint from one of the two art languages into the other. All but the *very best* water-color painting is extremely crude, in comparison with moderately good work in oil ; and this crudeness is especially hateful in skies, which are full of tender

varieties of mingled gray, even in their most splendid passages.

In making this translation, the forms of the memorandum should be followed with the most servile fidelity. Every scratch in a good memorandum, even though inaccurate, is full of meaning, and is not to be omitted without loss. As the translation is to be done on the scale of the memorandum, accuracy may be gained and time saved by tracing.

PHOTOGRAPHIC MEMORANDA.

Whenever painters employ the camera for their own purposes, they must first divest themselves of all desire to produce pretty photographs. The photographic process gives very little truth at a time, and it is necessary that the painter who has recourse to it should know exactly what truth he wants, and sacrifice every other truth to that. It takes half a dozen photographs to get the details of a single scene if it is extensive. The painter should fix his mind on some particular portion of his subject each time he photographs it, and *try for that particular bit only*. If he does this intelligently and resolutely, and is tolerably skilful in the manipulation of the wet collodion process, he may get some memoranda which will be useful to him in the way of reference. One notable advantage of photography is that it renders the forms of shadows quite accurately, and *all at once*, which no drawing, however swift, ever can do. This is especially useful for memoranda of mountains whose shadows are generally so multitudinous as to defy the draughtsman, and yet so expressive of form that hardly one of them can be spared. The whole question of the utility of photography to artists is examined in the chapter on the Relation between Photography and Painting.

Such are the principal memoranda which it is desirable that a painter should possess before he begins a great work in his studio. I think it ought to be by this time evident that painters, who gather such elaborate memoranda as

these, do not work in the studio merely because they are too idle to work from nature. On the contrary, it would in most cases be a considerable economy of toil to do the picture itself from nature, instead of devoting weeks of labor to the patient accumulation of materials.

Although we are to rely as little as may be on the memory, we cannot paint away from nature without continual reference to it. Minute difficulties are perpetually arising, which nothing but the memory can solve. In order to paint really well in the studio, we need vast and profound science. I can give no conception to persons not practically acquainted with our art, of the immense miscellany of information which a landscape painter must have at his command if he would make the best use of his memoranda. He employs, in fact, at every instant, the whole of his professional education and experience, just as a clever lawyer does in his daily practice, or a skilful general in actual warfare, or an experienced surgeon when he pays his daily visit to his hospital. The amount of knowledge which may be concentrated in the painting of half a dozen leaves, or in the covering of one square inch of canvas representing a bit of mountain flank, or a fragment of morning cloud, is so vast that it could not be fairly stated in many such volumes as this, even if words could express such knowledge at all, which they cannot. And all good studio painters, however abundant and minute their memoranda, paint far more from knowledge accumulated in the memory by years of observation, than from the studies and sketches in their portfolios. Hence every prudent painter who works much away from nature will train his memory by systematic exercise to the utmost strength possible for it. How far such training may be of use we have now to consider.

The Law of Exercise is universal. The memory works under that law just as the muscles do. If we refuse to exercise our muscles, they will become weak and useless; if we refuse to exercise our memories, they will become weak and useless. There is no escape whatever from this law.

When a man condemns his arm to inaction for a number of years, as, for instance, the Indian devotees used to do, that arm withers and stiffens. If a man should condemn his memory to inaction for a number of years, his memory would wither and stiffen.

People *see* that their bodies want exercise, but they do not perceive that *all* their faculties want it, one just as much as another. The faculties of the mind are generally treated much in this fashion: those that the individual finds the most useful in the way of money getting he develops assiduously by exercise; and the other faculties, whose exercise would embarrass and impede the increase of his wealth, he leaves to die out in disuse. Thus it is that we find so many fragments of men and so few *men*, — more artists like Turner, who could not spell, than like Leonardo and Michel Angelo, who were accomplished gentlemen. And thus it is that in our new school, if we do not look to it in time, we run some risk of having artists who are not only fragments of men, but even fragments of artists, with eye and hand cultivated to the utmost, but the memory dead of disuse.

There are two ways in which the memory is very commonly injured and ill-used.

First (the old way), by giving it no variety in its work, but setting it to one little dull task for ever, choosing always some task *beneath* its strength, and in every way unlikely to develop its strength.

Secondly (the newly invented way), by refusing it all exercise whatever, despising its services, and shutting it up without employment till it gets sickly and debilitated, and incapable of the slightest exertion.

Strictly speaking, there can be no such thing as landscape painting at all without the vivid light of a clear and vigorous memory. Such petty fidelities of practice as are so commonly found in the work of our younger students cannot of themselves give any claim to the title of landscape painter. Fancy any one calling himself a landscape painter who had never painted a mountain! And I think

I have already conclusively shown how far it is possible to paint a mountain without the aid of the memory.

But if the memory is utterly unaccustomed to carrying burdens, poor work it will make of it. Long training and much labor are needed before the memory is capable of carrying half a dozen natural truths for a day together.

How then is this faculty to be trained? What system of mental gymnastics will best develop its force and enlarge its capacity?

The right way is to learn something off by heart every day from nature, not drawing it nor sketching it in any way until we come home, and then trying to draw it faithfully. In these exercises Invention is to be employed as little as possible, because our present business is to make our memory reliable. It is, of course, wise to begin with very simple things indeed, and mere pencil-sketching; afterwards we may advance to sepia, and, lastly, to water-color or oil. *We are not to draw from memory things that we have already drawn from nature*, because, when we do that, the memory always has recourse to the drawing, and not to the scene itself; and we want to be able to remember nature, not our own performances. Bits of building are good for practice, because they are full of definite measurable facts, and are easily referred to afterwards. The student may gradually advance until he comes to try to learn by heart the front of a great Gothic cathedral, so as to draw it in detail at home without having sketched it from nature. When he can manage some such feat as this approximately well, he may attempt the sepia study, which is so far a preparation for the subsequent color work that it contains a complete statement of the relative darkness of all the local tints. After that it may be well to attempt oil-painting from memory alone without any assistance from memoranda, even the slightest sketch being a help too great to be permitted. When the details of a complete picture can be carried pretty safely in the memory, we may proceed to cultivate the inventive faculty.

The peculiarity of Invention is, that it is based on

memory, and is quite powerless unless the memory is richly stored. Inexperienced artists can never know whether they have any invention or not, nor can anybody else decide it for them until they have trained and stored their memories. When Turner was very young, his works showed no trace of noble invention; but as he grew older the inventive faculty progressed exactly in proportion as he enriched his memory. Memory is like a nation that provides the men and materials of war. Invention is the emperor, who disposes of all these resources, and marshals them on the fields of victory.

When we have for years been in the habit of systematically training the memory, we ought to be rich enough to find out whether we really have any invention or not; and it becomes henceforth our duty to cultivate the inventive faculty by exercise, just as we formerly did the retentive faculty.

The way to do this is to paint a certain number of pictures every year from memory and invention *alone*, without the aid of memoranda. If we are strong enough to do this well, it is, at this stage of our culture, the severest and best training possible to us as painters. In such works as these the memory is entirely subordinate to invention, and only furnishes the materials of which invention disposes at its sovereign will.

So that there are all these different ways of painting:—

1. Real painting from nature, possible only in foreground work.
2. Painting from nature with the help of memoranda.
3. Painting from elaborate memoranda, away from nature.
4. Painting from memory, aided by slight notes.
5. Painting from the unaided memory.
6. Painting from invention, aided by memory.

Since the custom of painting from nature became prevalent, there appears to exist a most unfounded idea to the effect that no progress in art is to be made anywhere but in the open fields. After very carefully examining the successive works of several landscape painters who do not

paint from nature at all, I am quite convinced, on the other hand, that striking progress is constantly made in *the art of painting* within the walls of studios.

We do not in the studio learn any thing new about natural aspects; but we may get a great deal of practical experience in painting as an art.

And at this particular epoch in the history of the English school, is it not this kind of experience which is most needed?

IV.

THE PLACE OF LANDSCAPE PAINTING AMONGST
THE FINE ARTS.

LANDSCAPE painters are very generally aware that there exist amongst figure painters and in society opinions relative to landscape art which tend to assign it a very inferior position. These opinions are not without grounds; they are founded on reasons which deserve consideration; but they fail to take into account other reasons of equal weight, which would, if fairly heard, have the effect of at least partially counterbalancing them. I therefore invite the reader's attention to the whole question, and beg him to enter with me into a fair examination of it, without hoping to settle definitively either this or any other disputed point about art, for it is idle to expect perfect harmony of opinion on these matters; we may still benefit ourselves by discussing such questions as this, since they involve the recognition of truths which we are always apt to lose sight of.

Amongst figure painters success in landscape painting is usually held in slight estimation as an artistic achievement, from the idea that it is so easy that no very great credit is due to mastery in it. The truth on which this opinion is founded is that accurate drawing is not necessary in landscape, and that scarcely any painter who confined his studies to that branch of the profession has ever been able to draw accurately. "In England," says Mr. Armitage, "nobody knows what drawing is."* Without going quite so far as Mr. Armitage, we may safely admit that learned drawing, or what Mr. Ford Madox Brown would

* Minutes of Evidence before the Royal Academy Commission. Question 5051.

call the pedantry of drawing, is much rarer in England than in France. But it is a fact very much to our present purpose that the French, who so rigorously exact this kind of drawing from their historical painters, scarcely so much as take it into consideration as one of the minor points in a landscape painter. The favorite landscape painter amongst artists in France, the one whose reputation has been made by the admiration of artists, Corot, can scarcely draw better than a school-girl. Our own Turner was not an accurate draughtsman, but he was a *good* one. The distinction which figure painters fail to observe in their criticisms of landscape art is this one between quality and accuracy. The necessities of pictorial composition make accuracy impossible for all but the most rigidly topographic landscape painter. When Titian or Paul Veronese wants a form to support another, he may make one figure bend and still draw it well; but when Turner needs the same thing in a mountain composition, he has to alter the main lines of the whole scene, and consequently every detail within them, and as he must do this every time he lays pencil to paper he becomes habitually inaccurate. But quality may be sought for and attained notwithstanding this inaccuracy. What I mean by quality of drawing in landscape is its truth to the *nature* of the thing represented. Perfectly accurate drawing would have this, of course, for it would be included in the merit of accuracy; but much topographic exactitude may be reached with very low quality indeed. The popular views of Switzerland, that so many tourists have such an odd fancy for carrying away in their portmanteaus as reminiscences of the country, are more truthful as to accuracy than Turner's, but in quality of drawing they are beneath contempt.

The next question is, whether this quality is easy of attainment.

It means, as I have said, the power of representing the nature of things; their abstract, innermost nature. For example, cloud must look like cloud, oak tree like oak, granite like granite; and in mountain drawing the most expressive markings must be instinctively selected. In all

things the kind of touch and workmanship must be found which will most truly render the nature of the object. An accurate outline, even accurate modelling, would often be easier of attainment than the craft which can accomplish this.

I find on examining the works of great landscape painters that quality of this kind, in drawing and color, has come to be their chief aim in middle life. They may try to draw accurately at first, but they usually discover, before the age of thirty, that to be accurate is of little artistic use in comparison with that far deeper kind of truth which for want of a special word we have to call quality. Turner let many of his more solid merits melt away from his canvases in the hope of reaching some exquisite results of this kind, and ultimately his aspirations ended in utter shapelessness. Constable in another way tried for quality, and if he failed in form, Troyon and the Bonheurs understood his aims and profited by his example.

"If landscape painters could draw," say historical painters, "they could draw the figure. Now we see that every time they attempt a figure they make things no better than puppets or dolls dressed as peasants, therefore we decline to consider them draughtsmen." One step more, and it is easy to refuse even the title of artist to a landscape painter. If you consider Academic drawing *every thing*, as Ingres does; if you consider that without accurate drawing there can be no serious art, as Mr. Armitage does, then you can scarcely look upon landscape painters as artists in the serious sense at all.

The difficulty of arguing this point on my side of it is, that whilst the figure painter appeals to a merit easily ascertainable, I appeal to a merit which cannot be proved to the satisfaction of any but competent judges; and for them all such proof is needless. *They* know that right abstraction is rare and difficult. All landscape painters find that to abstract in such a manner as to explain in every touch the essential nature of the object, requires infinite care and study. But who shall judge of the relative merit of *different* abstractions? It is evident that no measuring

by compasses will do this; for we admit that landscape abstraction does not profess accuracy of this kind. Relative merit can then only be determined by persons who have at the same time an intimate acquaintance with the kind of object represented, practical familiarity with the technical difficulties of the art, and a mind both philosophical enough to comprehend the nature of abstract ideas, and capacious enough to tolerate various interpretations. This last quality is perhaps the rarest of the critical endowments, because it requires us to have seen in nature all the facts which the united observation of the whole body of landscape painters has been able to discover there, and still at the same time to be catholic enough to praise one man for seeing one order of truths, and another for seeing a quite different order.

Now it is hopeless to expect these critical requirements from any one who in the least *despises* landscape art. If you perceive in any one, whether painter or connoisseur, the slightest approach to superciliousness in speaking of landscape, you may rely upon it that he neither has acquired nor ever can acquire, so long as he remains in that mood, any real knowledge of the subject. And the objection I have to make to the criticism of persons inclined to think little of landscape lies there, that they begin by despising it, and look upon the subject as unworthy their serious attention, consequently they are from the very beginning in an unteachable and unobservant frame of mind.

It is evident how seriously belief in the facility of landscape must detract from the consideration of landscape painters amongst artists, for artists always esteem each other mainly by reference to a standard of technical difficulty. This is probably one reason why landscape painters find Academic honors all but hopelessly unattainable by them. One of the most distinguished of living Academicians said to me, "The great charm of landscape painting is that it is so delightfully easy," and I believe most other figure painters share this impression. The feeling that they are no longer obliged to draw accurately

when painting landscape backgrounds is to them a feeling of relief. They enjoy a liberty which has removed an irksome responsibility and restraint, and are little capable in the full fruition of this novel pleasure, of estimating the real difficulties of an art which they take up occasionally in the spirit of relaxation. The public, too, is particularly kind and indulgent in its demands upon the landscape backgrounds of figure painters. It expects nothing more than a slight sketch which shall surround the figures with not inharmonious coloring. No true colorist can give less than that, even in his most careless hours.

But *is* landscape easy? Let us consider what elements it is composed of, what materials it attempts to represent.

A landscape painter has to encounter the difficulties of imitating the sky, the earth, vegetation, and water, and these difficulties are complicated and multiplied infinitely by *effect*, which, in landscape, utterly transfigures every object it touches, so that an object under one effect does not seem to be the same thing, has not even apparently the same *form*, as under another. It may also be observed that the difficulties of landscape painting are most seriously increased by the evanescence of the appearances it attempts to represent. If the effect would *stay*, the art would be less difficult, though still very far from easy. But so soon as the landscape painter desires to record any of those magnificent unities of nature, when her scenery masses itself together in full synthesis, he must work from memory alone.

Has the reader ever actively *looked* at a cloud, or a tree, or a running brook, or a calm lake? Perhaps not, for the majority never *look* at these things; they like pleasant landscape, they benefit by its exquisite influences, sunshine, lovely colors, sweet sounds, and pure, refreshing air; all these they truly appreciate and value in their way, but they no more *study* them than an amorous boy studies the anatomy of the fair face he delights in. External nature is, to the mass of mankind, a source of sensuous refreshment, not a matter of laborious observation; it is passive pleasure and perpetual benefit. Happier than critic

or painter, the rest of mankind need only enjoy what these have to investigate and remember.

But if the reader has ever looked at a cloud, can he believe that clouds are easy things to paint? Take a great, elaborate, well-developed cumulus, for example, — would not the modelling of it puzzle Ingres himself, and the unapproachable splendor of it defeat him? Could he, could any one, remember the true detail of it faithfully enough? Could any one draw it delicately enough?

Who ever really painted a field of the cloud vulgarly known as mares' tails, — those long films, delicate as the trains of comets, which wave with gentle curves across the sky? Who can remember a field of thirty thousand cirri so as to paint it truly? Hundreds of artists have attempted to render storms, but who ever gave the true evolution of the heavily-laden thunder-cloud? You who say that landscape is easy, paint for us the form and hue of those threatening messengers! There is modelling enough *there*, and strange gradations of lurid color too.

And the flames of sunset, dashing the blue lead color of the clouds at the horizon with intense streaks of crimson fire, fainter as they rise towards the zenith, and fading over our heads in scarcely perceptible inward glowing; are *they* easy? Is it easy to get *that* light with *that* color?

And the gradations in the exquisite open sky, so deep, so pure, so ever varying, by whom have they been quite rightly, quite unexceptionably wrought? By one or two early religious painters, it may be, but not in their full variety. Who can graduate quite truly an evening sky with intense gold at the horizon and cold blue at the zenith? Will there not generally occur some dubious or false passage between the gold and the blue? Skilful painters of draperies, are you perfectly confident that you can quite successfully resolve this particular little problem? And if you had mastered it, why, there are a million more such problems in reserve for you, *tous plus difficiles les uns que les autres*.

Mountains, too, are supposed to be easy. I may be ex-

cused for feeling sceptical on that point. I lived a few years under the shadow of Ben Cruachan, and carefully observed him under thousands of very different aspects, but it never occurred to me that that immense agglomeration of ever-changing, *yet always perfectly harmonious* detail, could by any possibility become easy to paint. Every separate aspect of that mountain would have cost the labor of months, and it did not last even *minutes*, only fractions of a minute. Who can carry in his memory for months the true relative color and true apparent form of the hundred minor hills that boss his craggy sides? But if Cruachan and Shehallion are too easy, have we not the Alps on which to wreak our energies? If bosses of crag and heather are unworthy of us, the white waves and azure crevasses of a glacier may deserve our condescending attention. Why does not some famous painter of history deign to prove to us that glaciers are easy enough, after all, to men who have had the advantages of a sound Academical education?

The subject of foliage is sure to draw forth the usual reference to Titian's "Peter Martyr." On this, however, two observations may be made: the first, that all figure painters are not necessarily Titians; the second, that his foliage, though the best in old art, is not nearly so good as his figures. However, I have not yet seen his "Peter Martyr," and prefer, for the present, to avoid any discussion in which I could only speak on the authority of engravings.

I do not admit that Titian succeeded as a landscape painter, further than this, that he painted landscape backgrounds which, as such, were satisfactory, and suited his figures. They are partly naturalistic, but also to a great degree governed by a conventionalism of his own. But even if Titian *had* painted landscape as well as paint would permit, would the necessary inference be that landscape was easy, or even that it was easy for *all* figure painters? That would be a poor compliment to Titian. Probably I, who consider landscape difficult, respect Titian more for what seems to me a very partial mastery

in the art, than many others do for what seems to them absolute success in it.

With regard to the foliage in the backgrounds of modern figure painters, it may be summarily divided into two classes: the careless and the careful. To the careless belongs *all* modern background foliage up to the second quarter of this century, and most of it since. To the careful belongs the work of Leslie, Mulready, Millais, and a few less celebrated men. Now Leslie, though everybody dislikes the chalkiness of his color, was a real painter. He could paint an expression, but he could not paint a tree; there are some trees of his at South Kensington, which, though excusable enough in a painter of polite comedy, would not do credit to a professor of landscape. I should imagine that Millais would paint a better tree now than when he attempted the willow in the *Ophelia*, or the blooming orchard that we all remember. Those efforts, though serious, and therefore most creditable (for how rare is such condescension on the part of a painter of genre!), failed on the side of hardness. The leafage was not like free, soft, natural leafage, with life and sap in its vessels; it was like artificial leaves carefully cut out of sheet metal painted green. The foliage and even the bough drawing of Mulready fail in another way. They attempt *massing*, but they are entirely conventional, and as examples for young landscape painters no models could well be worse. His trees are bad examples, on account of his satisfaction with them; there is no sign of effort after better things. They are drawn with more refinement perhaps, as to line, than Constable's, but there is a quality in Constable's work which all landscape painters must appreciate, the noble dissatisfaction which would rather even daub than draw, if in "drawing" is to be involved the sacrifice of moisture and mystery and freshness. Constable's trees are painted by a man who feelingly loved nature, and desired to express how nature affected him. Mulready's are either empty abstractions, or cold, though industrious, studies.

Not that an intelligent critic could, without reserve, say

that any one's foliage is "good." No painter hitherto has done more than express two or three of the chief qualities of trees. Foliage is so infinitely difficult that human craft always fails before it in some point, and always must.

In near leaf drawing no landscape painter has hitherto particularly distinguished himself. A few figure painters have introduced leaves well when they have paid attention to them; but they seldom give their natural relations as to position; they usually separate the leaves more than nature does, and avoid, to some considerable extent, the difficulties of fore-shortened curves.

When you add to difficulties of drawing and color those of illumination, you have a complication which only the greatest executants may hope to contend with. An accomplished master of the figure showed me several studies in which he had seriously attempted to paint near leaves in sunshine, all failures, and he knew it. The intensity of reflection and the brilliancy of transparency in sun-lighted leaves, all acting upon and through surfaces of such extremely varied and complex curvature, produce in the aggregate difficulties which no mortal hand may conquer.

Of water I hardly know how to speak, so little is popularly known of it. Even such a comparatively common and simple fact as the interruption of a reflection by a breeze is beyond the cognizance of many persons who concern themselves with the fine arts. I had a curious instance of ignorance of water phenomena one day when talking with a French art critic. I discovered that he was under the impression that an object could not be reflected in water unless the sun was behind the object; he actually believed that reflections and shadows were the same thing. A moment's observation on the side of any pond would have taught him a very different theory, but this little effort of observation is just what you cannot get people to give. The fact that breezes take all sorts of different *colors* is also not generally understood, a breeze being popularly supposed to be white, even by persons advanced enough to know that there are such things as breezes. So if any historical painter chooses to say that

water is very easy, I scarcely know how to answer him, the word "water" not signifying the same thing to both of us.

To paint a lake surface rightly, if it is varied by breezes and calms, and semi-calms and demi-semi-calms (for there are such things, and they are often all visible at one time), to paint such a lake surface, I say, with all the curves of its breeze outlines, and the truth of reflection in its little isolated bits of perfect mirror, and the ineffably light dimness of places that the faintest airs have breathed upon, and the million-rippled acres where the breeze is stronger, — to paint that vast and marvellous surface, so perfect in its finish, so exquisite in the phantasy of its design, so wide, so wonderful, and above all so evanescent, is a task to try the utmost skill of hand, the utmost power of memory, the utmost delicacy of sight ever reached by, or given to, the most finely organized of men!

And sea-waves, — what of them? Who can paint a wave, who can even draw one? Stanfield and Turner have given us two interpretations of waves which do indeed render some of the facts, and are full of honest intentions; but if you want difficulties, even the elementary ones are as yet unconquered.

Is there not an admission of the difficulty of landscape in the very desperation of the best landscape painters? When Turner came to paint at last in his wild later way, that was due to a recklessness brought on by two causes; first, the impossibility of really painting the facts he desired to record; secondly, the uselessness of trying to make them intelligible to the common public. And Corot, too, is reckless of much that a less sensitive artist would strive for. When he gets the right relative tone on any part of his canvas, he dares not meddle with it, dares not put detail upon it, may lightly sketch a thin twig or two across it, but is far too prudent to attempt what we call "finish." For finish in landscape painting is generally false, because true finish is so infinitely difficult. When a third-rate artist industriously dots over his trees with little regular lumps of paint, he calls *that* "finish."

No sensitive painter could endure to do that; he would rather splash like Constable, daub like Daubigny, blur and rub like Corot, blot and wash like David Cox. All these men would have told you that they considered their methods quite inadequate to represent nature, but that landscape painting was so difficult that they were forced to content themselves with any thing that would even approach the kind of quality they desired.*

Those who most habitually undervalue landscape painting for its inaccuracy are the very persons who least clearly understand what accurate drawing in landscape is and leads to. *It would lead to pure topography*, and there is little encouragement to draw landscape in that manner. A painter is an author, and likes to move his public, and topography moves nobody. And not only that, but topography, being the product of an artificial and rigidly self-conscious, self-governing state of mind, does not even satisfy the artist himself. If you draw an object freely and innocently as it appears to you, even setting aside all intention of composition, it will be quite wrong topographically. To get into a cool and accurate state you must reason with yourself, and say, "Every hill is half the height it looks, every curve looks twice as round as it is, every interesting feature is insignificant." You must disbelieve the evidence of your senses, divest yourself not only of the enthusiasm of the artist, but even of the common feelings of humanity; you must train yourself by patient labor and cautious self-denial to become a looking-glass. Are the backgrounds of the great historical painters models of this accuracy? And if they have it not, and can yet maintain a reputation as draughtsmen, why may

* I ought to say that since writing "A Painter's Camp in the Highlands," in which (vol. ii. p. 374) I spoke somewhat severely of Constable, some change has taken place in my views of him. Seeing much more in nature than I did then, I can better enter into the true spirit of his work. His execution still seems to me empirical; but I have learned to prefer intelligent experiments which prove original observation, even when they are only partially successful, to clever traditional handicraft. I have not space here to do Constable justice, but hope to do so fully on a future occasion.

not landscape painters who are but equally far from such rigid exactitude, escape the reproach of bad drawing?

Historical painters are no doubt generally in the right when they consider themselves more highly trained than landscape artists. It is not because they are more industrious or more intelligent, but the figure, though not less difficult than the materials of landscape, affords a more convenient and regular training. Its modelling can be studied quietly under a manageable light day after day; its surface is not broken as tree masses are by leaves, and mountain masses by rocks and forests; it is not so full of unforeseen accident; you know what to expect, and you find it; and, above all, when you are wrong, you readily perceive your error. Landscape, as usually pursued, affords no such steady and instructive training. Many clouds are as elaborate in form as a living model, but the model will stay for you and the cloud not. Cloud drawing, as training, is therefore what the figure would be if the students were only allowed to see nude figures marching past them, never for one instant still. Waves are even worse than clouds, mountains somewhat better, yet not so much better as would seem to persons who have not tried to paint them from nature; for a mountain never gives you time to study its modelling fairly. As for trees, the changes of light affect them even more than they do a solid substance, for the light gets *into* a tree amongst the leaves, and alters it continually from within as well as from without. Then, if you want to study leaves, — draw them on the bough, the light alters, the breeze moves them; bring them into the house, and they droop and fall out of their places. And for the first elementary study of mountains or foliage, what can you get comparable in point of practicable utility to a statue for the figure? The best model of mountain scenery in the world is probably that of Mont Blanc and its surrounding valleys, at Geneva; but a student of landscape could not procure such models, and if he could, they are only topographic sketches of the very rudest kind, lacking all those refinements that an artist looks for.

Again, the first training of a figure painter is more useful, as we see; but, what is of still greater consequence to him as an artist, his practical work after is more improving than landscape work. Landscapes are for the most part painted in the studio; they are *always* painted, even when in the presence of nature, to a large extent from memory. Painting from memory may exercise that faculty, but it adds nothing to the stock of acquired information. A figure painter, working constantly more or less from models, painting even inanimate accessories from the actual objects, is always acquiring information, always training and maintaining his faculty of representing things, and that faculty is nothing less than the very foundation of pictorial power. So that figure painters are likely to be better craftsmen than landscape painters. And are they not so in fact? Surely no unprejudiced observer can have failed to remark it.

The low position of landscape in the estimation of academies is probably in part attributable to this cause. The faculty of able representation is rightly esteemed by all good painters, and a class of artists which is habitually deficient in this quality is sure to find a difficulty in acquiring, *from artists*, honor and recognition. But the niggard recognition of landscape is also due to still more serious objections. It is the commonly received doctrine amongst painters of history and genre, that figure painting is the representation of *mind*, whereas landscape painting is the representation of matter. By an inference, not altogether justified, as I hope to show, not altogether logical, yet an inference of a kind which many persons are in the habit of accepting without question, they proceed thence to the conclusion that to paint the figure requires *mind*, whilst to paint landscape mind is not requisite, or at any rate, never called for in any thing like the same degree.

There are writers who speak of Turner as a copier of lifeless matter. This view ignores two things: first, the mind of Turner, who threw his whole soul into an interpretation of nature which was as far removed from copyism as Shakspeare's writing is from newspaper reporting;

and secondly, the mind of God, which invests external nature with all its interest, exactly as the mind of an author invests paper and print with interest.

The fact is, that by our ingenious invention of a goddess of nature, whom we are in the habit of speaking very lightly about, we have left the idea of God to theologians. In our mythology this nature-goddess holds a peculiar place of her own. She is half demon, half deity. Ten-nyson says she is

“Red in tooth and claw,
With ravine.”

Ruskin accuses her of miserliness! “Sometimes I have thought her miserliness intolerable; in a gentian, for instance, the way she economizes her ultramarine down in the bell is a little too bad.” Scores of writers speak of her in the same disrespectful tone. Substitute God for nature, and Him for her, and see how that little accusation of miserliness reads!

Do these writers really believe that nature consciously exists as a working goddess? Probably not. She is a fiction for the sake of convenience. In the present state of the public mind no fearless investigation of the Divine system of government, *as we see it actually at work*, is permitted to us; so when we talk of any hard and inexorable law, it is a “law of nature;” we do not exactly like, as yet, to call it a law of God. By this timidity we do ourselves serious intellectual injury, and, amongst many other unfortunate results, we arrive at one which closely concerns our present argument. Natural scenery, as the work of a supposed nature-goddess, whom we do not respect, has not, for us, any thing like that serious interest which it would have had if we could have received it as a direct expression of the Supreme.

I put forward this argument with no intention of writing what foreigners so justly reprobate as our English cant. For instance, in looking at a fine natural scene, the head of Loch Awe if you will, it never occurs to me to imagine that God designed it as an artist composes a picture. I

believe, rather, that by the operation of general laws depressions in the earth were produced, nobody knows exactly how, and that these basins become lakes, as the depressions in a Yorkshireman's plate of porridge become pools of milk, whilst the lumps rise out of them mountainously. And in my view the Scotch or Swiss lakes and mountains cost the Creator just as much thought as, and no more than, the hollows and lumps in the porridge. So of effects; I see God's invention in them, but do not superstitiously imagine that He designed every sunset separately as a painter does.

But, on the other hand, in spite of this modern recognition of pervading law, producing artistic beauty as it produces mechanical construction, I never look at any natural scene or object without the sense of being placed by it in direct communication with the Supreme Artist. You may, if you will, call this world inanimate nature, but every atom of it is inscribed. And let the reader be assured that to comprehend never so slight a manifestation of the Divine mind is no unworthy task for the proudest and cleverest of us. All who study the great natural Revelation are, as to the subject-matter of their studies, on a footing of fraternal equality. Anatomists, astronomers, botanists, geologists, landscape painters, figure painters, no one of these has the right to despise the pursuit of the other. There are inequalities of *capacity*: Raphael is greater than Dughet, but so is Turner greater than Haydon and West. In science we find no such narrow classifications. Men who explore the solar photosphere do not scorn men who explore a grain of pollen; men who dissect the human body do not scorn men who dissect vegetables.

And one great reason why we go to external nature now is because man no longer conveys to us the Divine idea in its purity, as an alp or a wild chamois does. It is very well to say that all human developments are in their origin Divine ideas, and no doubt this is in a certain sense true; no doubt the industrial age, for example, was a divine intention, so that in this sense even the most un-

lovely life in the hideous streets of Oldham and Rochdale deserves study for its interest as a necessary phase of human evolution. But the artistic instinct turns away from this. The artistic instinct is warned that such phases of human life do not concern it. They concern thinkers and rulers, not artists.

For there is no beauty there. Long rows of cottages, whose monotonous brick fronts are dark with soot; heaps of ashes on the black acre of building ground yet unoccupied; foul ordure visible everywhere; filthy children playing amongst it with bits of broken pot; behind the cottages a roaring factory, six or seven stories high, its vast monotonous wall pierced with a hundred windows, all alike, and all ugly—half an acre of ugliness, set up vertically against the sky, to bar the sunshine out; great chimney-stalks for towers,—ay, fifty of them within a mile,—pouring opaque clouds of foul coal-smoke into the vitiated atmosphere;—no human beauty left there that has not been marred beyond recognition by the life the men and women lead there from infancy; no costume but shapeless fustian for the men, having neither grace nor gayety; and long straight pinafores for the factory girls, bound round their waists with greasy leathern belts.

To any one having the sense of beauty,—and all true artists have it,—nothing can well be more depressing than the influences of such a scene. The heart sinks, the sight suffers under them. Yet within the distance of a day's ramble there are wild moors where the heather blooms, and little dells where pure streams fall over rocks of sandstone, under green fern, into lucid pools, where the crimson-spotted trout dart swiftly.

We are at the point at last. That street under the factory seems less Divine than this solitude. The street may have a more tragic interest, and some wood-cut designer, working in the same temper as Hood when he wrote the "Song of the Shirt," might find matter there for his notebook, but he must be a man caring nothing for beauty in comparison with human interest,—that is, he must be less an artist than a moralist.

One day I was in the cottage of a factory operative in a back street in Rochdale. The young man who was master of the house (they marry early there) was in a loud agony of grief. After the expiration of a minute, some men brought in a sack, apparently heavy; in the sack was the poor lad's young wife, dead. The sack was opened, and the surgeon who was with me gave the decisive word, "Nothing to be done." It was a most impressive scene; the dead woman's eyes were still quite bright, for she had died of heart disease, most suddenly, ten minutes before, and her face was by nature beautiful; but the prosaic character of all the accessories quite unfitted the subject for pictorial treatment. It would have done for Cruikshank, however.

Nothing turns away true painters from human life so soon as the loss of visible dignity. And our English life, in every class, has lost it. Our prosy ugly costume and love of convenience have taken away all grandeur from our visible style and carriage. Besides, we are not serious enough, mentally, to deserve the attention of the most serious artists. We are exactly suited for the caricaturist; we are the right material for Doyle and Leech; taking us at the best, we may do for Frith, but we should not much gratify Titian or Velasquez.

"Chose digne d'attention!" said the venerable Delécluze, "c'est lorsque rien n'est plus pris au sérieux, c'est quand l'homme en est arrivé à rire de lui-même que les artistes, ainsi que les poètes qui conservent cependant encore le sentiment et le goût des grandes choses, las de chercher en vain dans les actions des hommes quelque chose de cette grandeur dont la Bible, dont Homère entre autres fournissent tant d'exemples, rejettent en quelque sorte l'humanité comme une matière épuisée, et vont chercher dans la nature végétale et dans les animaux des sujets où la vie est imparfaite, mais demeurée pure depuis la création. Comment expliquer autrement le goût de Poussin pour la solitude, le soin qu'il a pris — lui, peintre d'histoire si excellent, de peindre les bois, les bords ombreux et tristes des fleuves, si ce n'est pas ce besoin impérieux qu'ont les grandes âmes de

se retremper aux sources primitives et inaltérables de la création ?”

Men and women are more wonderful than mountains, if in the overpowering marvel of creation one thing *can* be called more wonderful than another, when all are, alike, utterly incomprehensible by us. But men and women have a fatal liberty which mountains have not. They have the liberty of spoiling themselves, of making themselves ugly, and mean, and ridiculous. They tattoo themselves in South Sea islands ; what they do in North Sea islands it would be more prudent not to particularize. But a mountain does not know how to be ridiculous. A mountain cannot dress in bad taste. Neither is it capable of degrading itself by vice. Noble human life in a great and earnest age is better artistic material than wild nature ; but human life in an age like ours is not.

Note the subjects that true artists choose and avoid, and believe that their instincts lead them rightly. If they paint men, they go back to some age of costume and dignity, or else to some golden time of early poetry, when the primitive human creature fought and loved under the bright sky of the world's youth. Or, if it is contemporary life that they choose, they choose it as humble as possible, *to get down below the strata which vulgarity permeates*. Thus a noble artist will gladly paint a peasant driving a yoke of oxen, but not a commercial traveller in his gig.

I have said so much in other places about the popular ignorance of landscape, that it would be tiresome to harp on that string any longer ; but any one who is habitually attentive to the indications which show the state of culture on a subject that interests him, cannot help forming an opinion, more or less favorable, of the degree to which it is generally understood. What is to be regretted in the present condition of popular information about landscape is this ; landscape painters feel no confidence in the public, whereas an artist ought always to feel satisfied that if he merits acknowledgment he will receive it. Here is a little anecdote to the point. Last autumn I found myself on the

deck of a steamer plying on the lake of Geneva. It was crowded with passengers, and just as we got past Coppet, their great object of interest was Mont Blanc. A white cloud concealed the mountain, and all the passengers that I overheard were quite certain that the cloud was Mont Blanc itself. Shortly afterwards the snowy crest became visible, and then they believed that to be a cloud. This mistake would have been impossible if they had known any thing about landscape ; because, although clouds under certain unusual circumstances do occasionally look like mountains, that particular one had forms so entirely unlike mountain forms, that nobody acquainted with mountain anatomy could have made the mistake. Such little occurrences as this are, I repeat, discouraging to a landscape painter. Here were many gentlemen and ladies, rich enough to travel, who could not recognize a mountain when actually set there before them ; how, then, should they render justice to the same thing in a picture ? They used telescopes and opera-glasses ; but no trained eye would have needed a telescope ; that sharp, delicate outline of the snow would have been enough for it.

The reader is not aware, perhaps, that some figure painters even deny to landscape the right to exist as an independent art at all. Landscape is very good, they say, for backgrounds, but it was never intended as any thing else than a foil to human or animal life. The doctrine may be shown to be untenable by reminding the reader that there exist, in all *scenic* nature, magnificent compositions, any one of which would be entirely destroyed by the intervention of a large figure or animal in the foreground. No one who is familiar with the Highlands of Scotland, or Switzerland, or even with our English lake district, would desire to hand over pictures of their most striking scenes to a historical painter in order to have figures of large size painted upon them. Surely there are scenes in nature complete enough to deserve a few square feet of canvas to themselves !

A theory more commonly received is the following. It is urged that no scene in nature is worth painting without

some direct reference to humanity; that nature without human interest is devoid of artistic value.

This is one of those questions which cannot be settled in any definite way for the whole body of spectators. If you say that pure nature has no artistic interest, you speak truly, no doubt, so far as your own feelings are concerned, but I cannot admit that your proposition is universally true, because pure nature has an infinite artistic interest for me, and therefore probably for others who are similarly constituted. It is from the belief that I am on this point the spokesman of a considerable class that I venture to explain this sentiment more in detail. We who love pure nature are not indifferent to humanity. We may, as thinkers and moralists, take the keenest possible interest in human affairs, but we perceive that in this age men and their dwellings are not usually objects of much artistic interest both because they have so little beauty, and what is a far graver deficiency, so little sublimity. In these respects the loneliest defiles of the Alps are better than the hotels and tourists of Chamonix. Indeed Switzerland, in our view, is as nearly as possible *spoiled* by its visitors. In like manner we believe the valleys of Lancashire and Yorkshire, the beautiful vale of Todmorden, for example, to be (artistically) ruined by factories, and rows of cottages, and railways, and excellent turnpike roads. We have no objection to an old castle, we consider the head of Loch Awe to be improved by Kilchurn; but we cannot admire the modern castles of Taymouth and Inverary, much as we may respect the families of Breadalbane and Argyll. In short, when the human interest increases the pictorial value of the locality, as mediæval fortifications do, we are glad to have it, but when it diminishes the pictorial value, as almost all modern buildings and engineering works do, we prefer wild nature.

It remains only to indicate what, in the present writer's opinion, ought to be the chief aims of landscape painting, and what position is due to it. Its great object as an art ought to be the faithful rendering of the spirit and character of natural scenery and interesting localities. Any

accuracy is worthless which does not express character ; every inaccuracy is to be praised which helps to express it better. Every thing in landscape art ought to contribute to render, with the most striking fidelity, not merely the scene, but that which is far deeper and more divine, the *spirit* of the scene. And here, I am bound to observe, many of our most popular artists fail, and they fail from a dread of producing strange-looking pictures. If you paint local character, your work is sure to have peculiarities which will fail to correspond with the vague general ideas that exist on the subject of landscape, and therefore you are likely to offend. A well-known and most experienced dealer said to me one day, in all friendliness, "If you paint a truth which one spectator has not seen in nature, you make that man your enemy." A recent critic, speaking of an artist of real genius, Mr. E. B. Jones, said, what was true, that his works pleased some and offended others ; but then the critic proceeded to mention another artist, of whom he said, with understood allusion to Mr. E. B. Jones, that this man "trod on nobody's toes." To paint, then, in a manner not agreeable to the spectator, is resented by him as a personal annoyance and injury, — a treading on the toes. Now it is very desirable that a more liberal view should prevail. If the works of an artist do not please you, pass on to those of another whom you like better, and try to believe that there is no intention to hurt or offend *you* on the part of the painter you dislike. In all probability he has been aiming at some quality he thinks desirable ; perhaps he has not attained the quality, but is on the road to it. It is not his interest to give offence ; he would be ten times happier to give pleasure ; but he is trying to accomplish something that *he* sees clearly enough, no doubt, yet which it is not to be expected that we should see until he has fully set it forth.

I may have insisted upon this somewhat importunately ; I may have offended by praising the truth that gives offence, but no art doctrine has need of more frequent reiteration than this, *Local truth should be held sacred and inviolable*. I do not mean that we ought to confine ourselves to rigid topography, but that local character ought to be everywhere

affectionately studied, thoroughly understood, faithfully though freely rendered. And there is the more need to preach this doctrine that many critics have a lofty scorn of local truth, as something opposed to the true spirit of art and incompatible with noble work. For example, because Gustave Doré went into Spain before illustrating *Don Quixote*, a well-known French critic thought it the right thing to say that the work would have been better if Doré had not seen Spain.

I would entreat the reader to use all his influence in favor of that kind of landscape which really means something and expresses something. If a painter, by the side of some French river, is struck by some long monotonous line of poplars, do not find fault with the monotony, but thank him for it; it is the spirit of the place. If another painter far in the Scottish hills reproduces the sadness and solitude of their dear humble, barren crests, grey and purple in the chilly twilight, do not find fault with the melancholy and loneliness of his work; it *ought* to be melancholy and lonely, for that was the spirit of the scene.

It is generally a waste of time to trouble ourselves much about classifications of painters according to subjects; the points of real importance are the qualities of the individual artist. Any one who has the true critical faculty can easily recognize great powers in the treatment of very simple subjects. It is those powers by which an artist takes his place. And whatever branch of art a man may have chosen, if he has contrived to make first-rate gifts manifest in his work, I put him in the first rank. The phrases "*simple paysagiste*" and "mere landscape painter" imply that criticism is a much easier business than it really is. Truly, if the rank of artists might be settled by the kind of subjects they paint, anybody might be an art critic. The real difficulty of criticism lies in the fact that the most splendid artistic faculties may be lavished on apparently humble work, and a good critic is neither to be dazzled by ambition in the choice of a subject, nor turned aside from what is good and able because it does not happen to be at the same time pretentious.

The strong point of landscape is its power of affecting the feelings by influences very difficult to define in words. Music also has nameless powers, and, as a writer lately observed in the *Cornhill Magazine*, there is some resemblance between the way landscape painting and musical compositions move us.

I am inclined to believe that the communicative powers of musical sounds are habitually underrated. They deserve passing allusion here in connection with landscape painting, because music, like landscape art, is not strictly what is called an intellectual pursuit, and is held in exceedingly low estimation by all who are insensible to it. But may not these vague musical expressions of thought and feeling be the only expression possible for *those* thoughts and *those* feelings? I have often felt whilst listening to great music that something was thereby communicated to me which could not reach me through any other channel. Literary expression is no doubt more practical and positive; but are we quite sure that it is higher, merely because it is more definite? The same narrow spirit of classification which roughly sets down landscape as unmeaning, would put music below poetry; but the more we understand it, the more embarrassing it appears to settle its place. It may be that music expresses aspirations that words cannot express, and these aspirations may very possibly be higher than those we utter verbally.

If the peculiar strength of landscape lies in this vague kind of influence, that of figure painting is to be sought in dramatic expression. Thus, so far as it is possible to compare one man of genius with another, we might say that Leslie was a successor of Pope and Goldsmith, whilst Millais is the younger brother of Tennyson and Keats, whereas Turner might be better compared with some very great musician, as Beethoven, though my knowledge of Beethoven's music is not yet complete enough for me to know positively how far such a comparison would be reasonable.

As to the rank which landscape painting ought to hold

amongst the fine arts, I claim for it simple independence. One of my critics said that I seemed to rank it above figure painting, but that such would never be the general opinion. This is one of those misinterpretations to which every public writer is liable. Some previous writers have treated landscape with contempt, and I say that it does not deserve contempt; *therefore* it is inferred that I set up landscape art above figure art. The inference is entirely unwarranted. If any one asserts that landscape is easy, that it is a mindless copyism of dead matter, I am ready to answer him that it is *difficult*, and that, when good, it is a mindful *interpretation* of mind; that is to say, an interpretation by human genius of the Mind that created the world. But the idea of giving precedence to artists according to the subjects they choose, seems to me so unpractical, so inapplicable, so deficient in the simplest elements of common sense, that it never once occurred to me to entertain it.

The fact will always remain, that men take a keener interest in each other than in the external world, and so naturally pay most attention to the art which deals with man. Perhaps, too, our love of landscape is in great part due to a repulsion from the present unartistic and unlovely aspect of humanity. In an age when men and architecture are fit only to be caricatured, artists who have not the peculiar faculty of the caricaturist naturally go to external nature and the life of animals or peasants. But if, in the future, man and his dwellings should again become noble and interesting, will not artists turn to him and them again, and neglect the forests and mountains? There is some chance of this.

Meanwhile we have the beauty of the earth, and its grandeur. But can we paint its grandeur? Is it wise to desert the common pastoral subjects of Claude and Cuypp for the snowy crests that dazzled the eyes of Calame? M. Delaborde doubts this; he does not exactly admit that art may deal with the extraordinary in landscape. He is right in one point, I think. Painting, even the truest, is a kind of fiction; and it is admitted that fiction cannot

quite safely deal with extraordinary truth, because it appeals to the recognition of the fidelity of its representation, and few can recognize what is rare in nature. So far, it may be admitted that Troyon, for instance, was wiser than Calame. But I object to M. Delaborde's idea that Alpine scenery is more "irregular" than commonplace landscape; and I object also to another theory of his, that such scenery lies out of the conditions of portraiture. Alpine scenery may not be familiar to Parisians, but it is strictly natural, strictly under the influence of *law*, and of very wonderful and beautiful laws too; indeed, the laws of earth structure can nowhere be seen more plainly than in Switzerland, where, from flat diluvial ground to Alpine *aiguilles*, you can study every manifestation of the energy of the earth. And as to the objection that the Alps lie out of the conditions of portraiture, let this little anecdote answer it. Not very long ago, I entered Martigny in the evening from the Forclaz. A nameless mountain rose before me, but I knew it instantly from a drawing of Ruskin's. I had quite forgotten the locality of the drawing, but on returning home I looked through "Modern Painters" and found it. The real truth is, that every mountain has features of its own which bring it within the conditions of portraiture quite as much as a man's face; but faithful landscape is too modern to obtain recognition, as yet, from orthodox criticism, which always makes a point of being a century or two behind its age.

Of Calame's degree of success in Alpine landscape I have not space to speak here with justice; but, considering what had been done before him, he was a discoverer in art. What is more to our present purpose is the comparison instituted by M. Delaborde between Flandrin and Calame, so much to the disparagement of the latter. This is only one instance the more of the extreme difficulty of obtaining in landscape any thing like that serious kind of consideration awarded to distinguished figure painters. Calame deserved this if ever any one did. He was quite as earnest as Flandrin, and quite as pure and devoted a genius. Calame had the highest aims, and in great part



realized them ; so indeed had also Flandrin. But Calame practised an art which did not admit of the direct display of those human sympathies which most surely reach the heart of humanity. Flandrin painted saints and princes ; Calame gave the energy of a life to the chilling sublimities of nature.

Closely connected with the dislike to extraordinary scenery is the dislike to extraordinary effects. The spectator's impression on looking at a picture in which one of these effects is attempted appears to be frequently something of this kind : "The artist is amusing himself at my expense : " or else, "The artist means to read me a lesson on my own ignorance ; " and in either case a feeling of rebellion or resentment arises. The simple truth is, that effects are the life of landscape, and that the most powerful of them are the moments when this life is carried to its utmost pitch and paroxysm of intensity. Such effects are necessarily rare, as the crises of passion are rare in the soul of man ; but no one knows a landscape who has not seen it under a noble effect, just as no one knows a human being who has not seen him in a moment of supreme excitement. And again, not only for their intensity of life are the noble effects observed and valued, but still more for their great artistic quality of synthesis. A fine effect is pictorially complete ; a common effect is usually scattered and comparatively unmeaning : a fine effect has large masses and vigorous oppositions ; a common effect is apt to be broken and feeble, requiring much artistic faculty in the painter himself to get a synthetic whole out of it. And it is especially natural that colorists should like the rare effects because they always give magnificent arrangements of color. Intense gold and purple are to be seen on the horizon of hilly countries for ten minutes at a time, on perhaps twenty evenings in a year ; rich crimson and fiery scarlet still more rarely. A landscape painter who loves gold and purple, or crimson and scarlet, is therefore very naturally led to attempt these rare effects. A figure painter who loves the same colors may introduce them whenever he chooses by means of draperies and accessories.

As to the prudence of attempting these effects, no doubt that is another question. If we cannot paint plain daylight, it is useless to attempt these splendors. But no young landscape painter would be worth much who did not long to try for them; and even a few failures may be better for him than placid contentment with sober green and grey.

The worst of adopting landscape as a means of expressing yourself is the difficulty, *not* of putting intelligence and feeling into your work, for landscape will absorb any quantity of both, but of getting credit for them when there. It may be answered, that painters ought to be above the desire for public recognition, above the vanity which cannot live without praise. But we may observe that not painters only, but *all* men, need recognition in their avocations to enable them to work cheerfully. It is not praise and fame they want so much as the satisfaction of feeling that the amount of mind they put into their work will reach others. Nothing is more cruelly discouraging to an intellectual and feeling workman than the sense that an obstruction exists between his mind and the mind of the public.

This may serve to account for the fact, that whereas we have in England, at the present day, at least a dozen most excellent landscape painters, and twenty or thirty really good ones, we hear on every side complaints of the decadent condition of landscape. Now it is a positive truth that the *average* merit of landscape work has never been so high or any thing like so high as it is now. But a few years since a great commotion was made about the works of Turner, and the brilliant advocacy of a distinguished writer directed, for a time, public attention to the branch of the art which Turner professed. Since then the public mind has reverted to its natural channel, and even great landscape painters have no chance of obtaining that degree of attention which is freely accorded to third-rate painters of a figure. Lee Bridell awoke a little murmur of fame before he died, and a few were aware that a noble career had been cut short in its early prime; but the busy world

was ignorant of its loss. The imperial biographer of Cæsar has read the nations a lesson on their want of confidence in that order of genius which must subjugate before it can improve; yet it is not unnatural that we should fail to recognize benefactors who begin by requiring us to be slaves. An ingratitude far less excusable is that which repels a benefit accompanied by no condition, and turns away coldly from the kindly teaching which would lay no yoke upon us but the thrall of a sweet pleasure that never knew repentance.

V.

THE RELATION BETWEEN PHOTOGRAPHY AND
PAINTING.

IN the course of the first volume, I promised to state, before concluding the work, whatever opinions I might be able to form on this question of the relation between photography and painting.

I may now venture to offer such results as I have been able to arrive at.

I feel, however, a little embarrassed at the outset by doubts as to the degree of information on these subjects which I may prudently presuppose on the part of the reader. I hesitate between writing in a manner intelligible only to persons already in possession of the most commonly known facts concerning the two arts, whose mutual relation I purpose to examine, and writing in another, and more elementary manner, which may better suit the general reader, but render this chapter intolerably tedious to an informed one.

It seems best to err on the side of clearness and prolixity. For it would be idle to expect, on the part of persons not actively occupied in these arts, a sufficient degree of information to make a technical essay intelligible to them. I have very good grounds for believing that there are few persons living in England (in proportion to the population), who really know what photography is; and, probably, still fewer who are aware what compromises, and concessions, and subtle artifices are necessary to the construction of any thing like a good picture. I find the general impression about photography to be that it is as perfect as a reflection of the scene in a mirror, with the single deficiency of color; and the common notion of painting seems to be even less accurate than that, for it entirely ignores the

most refined art of the artist, without which painting could only imitate what is imitable in nature, and never aspire to interpret what is beyond all human imitation.

And, therefore, I will first try to explain what photography is.

Photography is the blackening and decomposition of a salt by *some* of the solar rays.

"It is drawing by light," says some etymologist who has not yet forgotten his Greek.

Pardon me, it is *not* drawing by light, and the word photography is a misnomer. If a photograph were really drawn by the luminous rays, it would be far truer than it is. Mr. Hardwich has clearly distinguished between the luminous and actinic rays, or the rays which produce what we call light, and those which effect the chemical changes we foolishly call "photography." He says, in his "Photographic Chemistry" (Fourth Edition, p. 61), "The actinic and luminous rays are totally distinct from each other, and the word 'photography,' which signifies the process of taking pictures by *light* is, in reality inaccurate." And, again (page 62), "In exemplifying further the importance of distinguishing between visual and actinic rays of light, we may observe, that, if the two were in all respects the same, photography must cease to exist as an art. It would be impossible to make use of the more sensitive chemical preparations, from the difficulties which would attend the previous preparation and subsequent development of the plates. These operations are now conducted in what is termed a dark room; but it is dark only in a *photographic* sense, being illuminated by means of yellow light which, whilst it enables the operator easily to watch the progress of the work produces no injurious effect upon the sensitive surfaces."

Photography having been ascertained to be the blackening and decomposition of a salt by some of the solar rays, the next question of importance is *how* these rays blacken it.

And here it is necessary to say a little about Nature's light.

Let one million represent the sun, the brightest thing

we know, and the unit represent the blackness of night, the blackest black we know. If we take this as representative of Nature's scale of light and dark, the most extensive scale attainable on paper may be from a dark five hundred times *lighter* than Nature's dark, to a light a thousand times *darker* than Nature's light, or somewhere between the figures 500 and 1000.

So that to represent Nature's million degrees we have, let us say, about five hundred degrees.

Nature is very rich and Art very poor. Nature has a million to spend where Art has five hundred. What is the most prudent thing for poor Art to do? There are two ways of imitating Nature. Art may spend side by side with Nature, degree for degree of light, coin for coin, till all her resources are exhausted, and then confess herself bankrupt. Or she may establish a scale of expenditure suited to her limited resources; and, abandoning all hope of rivalry with Nature, set herself to the humbler task of interpreting her.

And here is the first essential difference between photography and painting; a difference which, of itself, is sufficient to separate them for ever.

Poor Photography spends degree for degree with rich Nature, and of course, is very soon exhausted; but poor Painting husbands her little resources, and spends a penny for light where Nature spends a pound.

All photographs, therefore, which attempt to copy Nature's effects of light, lose themselves either in a vacuity of light or a vacuity of shade.

Here is another illustration, but not so good a one as the preceding, because it does not sufficiently set forth the enormous difference in scale between nature and the photograph.

Nature's power of light is like a great organ with all its vast range of octaves. The photograph's power of light is, in comparison, something like a voice, but a voice of extremely limited compass.

How is the voice to follow the organ in an exercise on the scales?

The voice will sing its own notes in the places where they occur, but must ignore all the rest.

This is exactly the way the photograph imitates nature. And when Nature plays only in the middle of her scale, photography would follow her with much accuracy if it were not for that fact about the excited film being insensitive to yellow rays.

Now, what is painting?

It is an intellectual and emotional interpretation of nature by means of carefully balanced and cunningly subdivided hues. Its powers of *imitation* are extremely limited. However, the eye of the painter, instead of being insensible to every thing that is yellow, is as sensitive to gold and orange as to blue, so that in this respect he may do truer work. And in his way of interpreting nature's light, he has opportunities of compromise and compensation which the unthinking photograph cannot have. So he gets more truths.

With a view to ascertain something of the relative power of light in nature and art, I have made a few simple experiments which the reader may easily repeat for his own satisfaction.*

People cannot see either pictures or photographs in full out-of-door sunshine. They see them best, and they see them habitually, in quiet, dull daylight without sunshine.

The sun in a picture is usually made of a little flake white, mixed with Naples or other yellow.

* This comparison of light in nature and in art contains nothing new, except the illustrations; for the question has been well stated already by Mr. Ruskin. His statement of the superiority of nature in power of light is so far from being exaggerated that it is considerably within the truth, though I dare say astonishing enough to most of his readers. All this has, of course, been known to artists for generations; at any rate since Claude's time, who, having tried to paint the sun, must have found out that it was brighter than white lead. Nor is it probable that our modern artists any more than Claude owe their knowledge of these facts to Mr. Ruskin, whose works, I am really sorry to say, are very little read by painters. A few of them have read the first volume of "Modern Painters," but I have not yet met with one who had got through the second; and as this statement about light occurs in the *fourth*, it is as if it had never been published at all, so far as they are concerned.

The whitest flake white is not so white as snow.

During the winter months I have obtained a great many memoranda of mountain snow. On looking over these memoranda I find that when not illuminated by direct sunshine the snow is in many instances considerably darker than the sky; darker even than gray clouds.

And yet I know that the flake white I have to imitate *snow in sunshine* with is, in reality, itself *darker than snow in shadow*.

Our whitest white is darker than many of Nature's ordinary blues and greens and reds.

And our blackest black is lighter than many of Nature's grays.

This last fact is easily ascertained. Hang a common black cloth dress coat on a stand out of doors any moonless night, so as to bring it against the sky. Throw the light of a lamp upon it, and you will find your black cloth coat, the blackest thing you have, a great deal lighter than a clear starlit sky.

And this experiment gives a result infinitely below the truth. A fairer way would be to cast some rays of electric light on the coat, because, as everybody knows, who has walked in the streets at night, even gaslight is immeasurably below ordinary clouded daylight, such as we require for seeing pictures.

Well, but though the sky is darker than the coat, there are some clouds visible which, in their turn, are considerably darker than the sky. And the mountain under the clouds is infinitely darker than they are. So here we are in Nature's bass notes; and no art can get down there.

In all photographs which attempt landscape, and include distant and highly illuminated objects, such as mountains and the sky, the sensitive film of the negative has always been so entirely decomposed by Nature's middle degrees of light as to leave no room for farther decomposition by the highest, or else the time of exposure has been insufficient for the due action of Nature's lower degrees of light, so that they have not been able to make any impression.

The consequence of this in the *positive*, with which the public is most familiar, is that all Nature's higher notes are lost in white vacancy, or else all her lower notes in black or brown vacancy.

Thus, in a photograph of the sea ; because the sea is a bright object ; if we want to have the glitter of the wave we must expose our negative so very short a time that any solid objects on the shore will take no effect upon it, and be left blank.

In the positive, these blank objects will, of course, print as brown silhouettes.

We will now examine a few photographs by the ablest hands to see whether this is so. And then we will examine one or two pictures and engravings to see in what manner intellectual art contends with this great difficulty, and how far the human intellect has found means to overcome it.

I have at hand a portfolio of good photographs by professional photographers, and a portfolio of photographs, not so good, done by myself. These will afford ample materials for our investigation.

One of the best photographs of the sea, which I have been able to procure in Paris, is a view of sea and sky, with a pier and light-house at the spectator's right. It is by E. Colliau, and is entitled "*La Jetée*." The negative has been exposed a very short time indeed, in order to preserve the light on the clouds, and the glitter of the sunshine on the water. These two truths are accordingly obtained, the silvery touches of soft light on the clouds are all admirably rendered, and the glitter of the ripple is accurately recorded, too. But the gray shade of the clouds is given in deep brown ; and, although the sun is high, the light-house, the pier, and the people upon it *are all in silhouette, without the faintest trace of any detail whatever*. Of course, if M. Colliau had exposed his wet collodion negative a few seconds more, he would have obtained the detail in the pier at the cost of his sky, which would have been all decomposed away by the powerful action of the abundant chemical rays, and his negative on development

would have exhibited a black sky over a very dark sea, which in the positive would have given us a white sky and pale water, without glitter. But we should have had our pier in the corner quite perfect, and should have been able to see the people upon it distinctly.

A prudent photographer will always, where possible, avoid these discrepancies. The pier was introduced to add a little human interest to the subject, and in this respect with judgment, for one cannot help sympathizing with the people on the pier, who are waiting for their friends. But in photography, the great compass of Nature's light should never be attempted, for it can never be even suggestively rendered. And M. Colliau has succeeded in producing better sea-views, where there was nothing in the foreground darker than the sea itself, as, for example, in that one entitled "*Le mauvais temps*," one of the most valuable memoranda of the action of sea-waves I possess, and for which I feel extremely grateful. The peculiar *leaping* of sea-water is perfectly given, and the white crests in the middle distance are as good as may be. This photograph fails towards the edges, where it becomes dark — a common defect in sea-views, on account of their very brief exposure, which M. Colliau has wisely remedied in some others of his by having the positives cut into ovals before being mounted. With the exception of this defect, this photograph is all that one can desire; the light in the natural subject, though excessively high in pitch, being very limited in compass. For the *pitch* matters nothing whatever to the photograph, as that can always be transposed to Photography's own key by an exposure more or less prolonged; but the *compass* is of the greatest importance, because Photography has so narrow a compass, that when the natural subject includes both treble and bass notes, she must pass two-thirds of them in absolute silence.

I have an oval photograph of sea by M. Colliau, with a boat in the middle distance. The time of exposure must have been very brief, for the forms of the waves are quite firm and clear, yet there is nothing black but the hull of

the boat. If there had been any thing solid in the foreground — as, for instance, a pier — it would have come in silhouette, and spoiled the photograph.

I have another oval of rough sea, by the same manipulator. It includes a fine cumulus cloud, and is altogether wonderful. Where it fails as a study is in the absence of distinction between *foam* and *reflection*. The negative has evidently been exposed long enough for the *foam* to act upon it; so that it is as bright as the glitter, and there is no separating them. A little more exposure, and the middle tints would have blackened the negative all over the surface of the water in the interstices between the spots of foam and glitter. Once this done, the picture would have been destroyed altogether; for the sea would have been one black blank in the negative, and one white blank in the positive.

And now, if you want to know the relation between these marine photographs and a good picture of the sea, it is easy to ascertain it. We have only to compare one of the best specimens of marine photography we can find, with one of the best pictures of sea hitherto produced by our realist school.

I will take for this purpose one of Gustave le Gray's marine photographs, and Holman Hunt's exquisite little picture entitled "Fairlight Downs. Sunlight on the Sea."

In the photograph the blaze of light upon the sea is given with perfect fidelity; but in order to get this, and the light on the edges of the clouds, all else has been sacrificed — the shaded sides of the clouds, in nature of a dazzling gray, brighter than white paper, are positively black in the photograph, and the pale splendor of the sunlit sea, — except where it *flashes* light, — is heavy and impenetrable darkness. Towards the sides of the photograph, the distinction between sea and sky is wholly lost in one uniform shade of dark brown, extending from top to bottom, without any indication of a horizon; so that, if you were to cut a strip an inch and a half broad from each side of the photograph, no one on looking at the

strip would at all suspect that it represented either sea or sky, or any thing else in nature. The crowning falsity is, however, the sun itself, which is *darker* than the surrounding clouds, being simply a gray wafer on a white ground.

However, since it is one of the peculiar misfortunes of the photograph that it is not capable of giving two truths at once, not having any method of compensation like that which every painter finds out for himself, we must be satisfied in all photographs of sunlight on the sea with this one truth only — the glitter on the ripple — and not ask for any more. I have observed that simple people always take such photographs for moonlights, and I suspect that they are extensively sold as such. The truth is that they *do* approach nearer to the character of moonshine than sunshine; but even in moonlit water, there is a *diffused* light outside the reflection or glitter, which is lost in these photographs.

It is agreeable to turn from this representation of one truth to a picture which, in about the same superficies, gives us a thousand.

At Mr. Gambart's Winter Exhibition in the year 1858, the reader may have seen a wonderful little picture by Holman Hunt, entitled "Fairlight Downs. Sunlight on the Sea." The sunlight itself in its broad white glare on the water under the sun, and its gradual scattering into glitter to the right hand and to the left; in its long lines in the distance, divided by the shadows of the clouds; in its restless flashing on the crests of the little waves far away, is as true and truer than the photograph — but here all comparison ends, because there is no longer in the photograph any thing to be compared with the picture. Where the photograph is simply dark brown, the picture is full of the most marvellously delicate gradations, and the sweetest play of hue. Where the glitter is not, we have still the sunlit beauty of the fair sea, which is indeed better and more precious even than the glitter itself, just as the fairness of a beautiful woman is better than the glitter of her diamonds. And there is a hot haze in

the blinding distance miles away, and there is a sultriness in the accumulated clouds which shall light up that sea at night with another and more terrible splendor. And then there is the green of the rich land, and the purple of the fallow, and nearer is a mingled glow of scarlet flowers and green leaves, and staring sheep, and a dog, and the shepherd's staff. And all these other facts Hunt could get into his picture because painting is a great intellectual art; an art of compensation, and compromise, and contrast; an art capable of moderation, and subject to mastery. And all these other facts Gustave le Gray could *not* get into his photograph, because photography is not a fine art, but an art science; narrow in range, emphatic in assertion, telling one truth for ten falsehoods, but telling always distinctly the one truth that it is able to perceive.

On comparing photographs with good topographical pen-drawings of the same objects, I find a result very different from any thing that many persons would expect. I find the *sum* of detail, in subjects including both distant and near objects, to be much greater in the drawing than in the photograph. Thus, Bisson's Chillon, a magnificent photograph, gives the castle in true detail, but loses the near foliage in black, and the mountain detail in pale brown, like the sky. A good topographical drawing would have given the castle less exquisitely, but we should have had the near foliage thoroughly drawn, and the mountain forms defined. I have before me a good positive of the Lac de Gaube, evidently printed from a waxed paper negative, and therefore a remarkable degree of detail is not to be expected; still, I think, few people not accustomed to analyze photographs would be prepared, in a photograph of clear weather, such as this one evidently is, to find such a large space of sheer vacancy as the mountain slope on the left. A topographical drawing might be done in a week which would contain ten times as many facts as this photograph.

I once took a waxed paper negative of Craiganunie, and have since drawn and painted the same subject in various ways; I find that with five or six hours' labor, I

can get a memorandum containing much more detail than the photograph. I do not pretend to say that the details in the drawing are so accurately or delicately done; but they are quite accurate enough for artistic purposes, and there are *more of them* than in the photograph.

I know that the collodion process would have afforded me more abundant detail; but, to an artist, this additional detail is often of little consequence, being not *the* detail he wants. For the best photograph of any extensive scene never gives more than *partial* detail, however perfect as far as it goes. The artist, too, gives selected detail, that which seems to him the most needful and vitally expressive: and here, ten to one, if he is a good artist, he and the photograph will not be of the same opinion.

It is, therefore, quite impossible to produce good pictures by copying photographs. And this is the reason why Mr. Ruskin, in answer to a malicious accusation against the pre-Raphaelites, that they "copied photographs," challenged the accusers to produce a pre-Raphaelite picture themselves, or any thing like one, by that process. The challenge was perfectly safe, and, of course, has never been responded to.

The way in which artists ordinarily use photographs is this. When their memoranda from nature are not minute enough, as sometimes from circumstances they cannot be, painters will take a suggestion from a photograph, and *invent* details for their pictures, which the photograph rather suggests than contains. This is the practice of some artists I know, but I have been told, on good authority, that one of our most popular painters of winter scenery always works from the photograph alone, and never even draws from nature. The study of winter scenery from nature involves, of course, the physical difficulty of resistance to the cold; and it seems natural that a painter who does not use a studio-tent like mine should find painting from photographs in a warm studio pleasanter work than painting from nature in the cold open air of December. Even in this extreme instance, however, the true way of stating the case would be to say that the artist works from mem-

ory and invention aided by reference to photographs, because there is a good deal of color in his works, which could not be got from photographs; and his system of light is artistic and not photographic, a little fact which, of itself, at once precludes all idea of copying photographs.

Since most artists buy photographs of subjects not often obviously connected with the particular subjects of their pictures, the question naturally suggests itself, whether it would not be desirable for the painter to take photographs himself, which might afford more direct and useful data than any procurable in the shops, as he might then obtain memoranda of the particular subjects he intended to paint. Such a course appears at first sight likely to be peculiarly advantageous to a painter, for the important reason that he might adjust the time of exposure of the negative to the especial result required; and so, by taking several photographs of the same subject, of different degrees of exposure, obtain from their united testimony the various truths of detail he would need for his picture. This suggests itself as a wise and politic course to pursue, for it apparently obviates the greatest inconvenience of photography, its loss of detail at the two ends of the scale. By a careful regulation of the exposure, half a dozen collodion negatives of one scene might be made to yield an enormous aggregate of detail in every part of the subject.

It seems also evident that since the wet collodion process is almost instantaneous, certain memoranda of effects of light may be got by its means which are not otherwise attainable; as, for example, the complicated shadows of mountains, which it is quite impossible to draw truly on account of their swift changing. And, to a painter who has to deal with rich architecture, it seems as if the photograph would be a most useful servant, giving him accurate data for every stone in the most elaborately wrought building.* There can be no doubt that no memorandum of cloud-form is equal to a photograph, for none other can be

* I speak of exteriors only. Gothic interiors are generally too dark to be photographed in detail.

true, even in outline; whereas, the sensitive collodion will arrest in an instant the flying change of innumerable clouds. And, in matters of foreground detail, when a painter cannot remain on the spot to finish an elaborate drawing from nature; as, for example, on a Swiss glacier, the abundant detail obtainable by a collodion photograph in a few seconds, will naturally tempt a landscape painter to encumber himself with a camera.

For this photography, as an art so imperfect, is a wonderfully obedient slave for the collecting of memoranda, if only its one great peculiarity be humored a little. Photography cannot often give very much truth at once; but it will give us innumerable truths, if we only ask for one at a time. And a large collection of photographic memoranda, taken by a painter for especial purposes, seems likely to be a precious possession for him.

But here occur other considerations.

Photography affords a very interesting proof of a fact well known to artists, that a certain degree of exaggeration is quite indispensable to apparent veracity. I believe that this is so in literature also; and that no study of human character would ever be generally recognized as true which was not idealized and exaggerated almost to the verge of caricature. A certain extravagance of statement seems in literature essential to effective work; owing, I suppose, to the coarseness of our faculties, which need something stronger than pure truth, as the ordinary British consumer will only drink doctored wines, and despises the genuine juice of the grape. But, however this may be in books, it is quite demonstrably so in pictures, as the photograph conclusively proves. Photographs of mountains are hardly recognizable. The most careful topographic drawing, if it looks like nature, is sure to be full of exaggerations. People who are not aware of this never can recognize photographs of distant scenery, however familiar the scenery may be to them; but they will recognize an exaggerated sketch without difficulty. I have found this continually here. I do my best not to exaggerate in working from nature; but, as soon as ever I get

interested in my subject, I cannot help exaggerating ; whereas the photographic machine, being absolutely indifferent, will not give the least additional emphasis to the most interesting feature in its subject. The grandeur of noble scenery excites the imagination. It is quite incredible how small a space is really occupied, in the picture on the retina of the eye, by that far gorge between the hills that we *know* to be a thousand feet deep, and five miles through. The photograph gives the fact in its stern truth, so many actinic rays and no more, an image so large in porportion and no larger. But the painter always sympathizes, more or less, with the excitement of the beholder, for he is himself a beholder. And therefore, the photographic truth about mountains will always, in its lifelessness, strongly offend the artistic sense, and seem false and inadequate, as, indeed, it is, in relation to the spectator's imagination.

But *all* good painting, however literal, however pre-Raphaelite or topographic, is full of human feeling and emotion. If it has no other feeling in it than love or admiration for the place depicted, that is much already, quite enough to carry the picture out of the range of photography into the regions of real art.

And this is the reason why a good painting cannot be based on a photograph. I find photographic memoranda of less value even than hasty sketches, though no painter was ever more dissatisfied with mere sketching. The photograph renders forms truly, no doubt, as far as it goes, but it by no means renders feelings, and is therefore of no practical use* to a painter, who feels habitually, and never works without emotion. And it is useless to try to eliminate feeling from our art even in plain portraiture. It is possible to draw portraits of mountains as grandly as Titian and Vandyke drew portraits of men ; and, mark you, when a painter proposes to himself the portraiture of particular scenes instead of the ideal landscape painting of the painter-poets, he no more abandons the life of a think-

* Except, of course, for *reference* as to matters of fact.

ing and feeling creature than an author who takes to writing history instead of fiction. A true painter both thinks and feels, and that always, but most intensely when in the actual presence of Nature. The photographic machine feels nothing, and there is precisely the same difference between its work and the soul's work in landscape portraiture that there is in figure portraiture. A topographic landscape painter may put as much tenderness and grace into his trees and clouds as Reynolds into his women, without at all quitting the very elastic limitations of portraiture.

I have found this utter insensibility of the photograph positively irritating when I have occasionally used it to obtain memoranda of my favorite scenes. It may be demonstrably, mathematically, scientifically true that the mountains round Loch Awe are reduced by perspective to very unimportant elevations in a narrow black line of land that serves to divide the sky from the water ; but it is no use telling me so, because either my eyes, or my imagination, or some unaccountable prepossession in my unreasoning instincts will have it they are quite otherwise. And the photographs seem to me unendurably inadequate and false, my own drawings only seeming tolerably true, though not so true as I would have them. The fact is, there is a glamor on all our eyes. Queen Nature has dazzled and bewitched us by her overpowering splendor and loveliness.

This power of the excited imagination to change the actual forms and relative magnitudes of objects I have repeatedly tested, with results that are quite astonishing. The best test, for a person who can draw, is to sketch some real scene exactly as it appears to him when excited by its beauty, not, of course, in forced coldness or real apathy. Let him afterwards photograph the same subject. On comparing the sketch with the photograph, he will understand the degree in which the fire of imagination affects the forms of things. And what is still more astonishing at first is, that he cannot believe that the photograph is true at all, it seems as if there were something altogether wrong about it. But if he sets up a threaded frame and

deliberately *measures* the mountains by the reticulations of the crossed threads, and then coldly copies them on a sheet of paper ruled with lines answering to the threads, he will prove the literal accuracy of the photograph. There is another way to prove it. Let the painter look at the same scene by starlight. In the daylight his imagination is excited by the mountains, and they seem to occupy the whole plane of vision, but at night it is not so: *then the stars tyrannize over the imagination and the mountains all shrink into a narrow, black, irregular line, tamed into absolute insignificance, and precisely like the brown stain that represents them in the photograph.* So that a photograph of a range of mountains may be a good and serviceable memorandum for a night picture, when they do not affect the imagination much on account of their own vacancy, and the stronger influence of the stars, and yet quite inadequate for any powerful daylight effect when the mountains themselves are mighty.

What we artists see is a vision of Nature through the lenses that *she* has given us, our own human eyes brightened or dimmed as may be with human joys and sorrows and emotions. That vision thus transmitted is reflected in the mysterious dark chamber of the skull, with a thousand subtle changes and strange variations of unaccountable fantasy. And it seems to me that although the scene is God's work and sacred, the lens also, and the dark chamber, are not less God's work, nor less sacred. Men's eyes were not given them to be superseded by carefully ground glass lenses of the best London manufacture. The glass lens is a wonderful thing no doubt, very difficult to shape and polish to its true surface curves, and the mahogany box is a very accurate and well-made specimen of joiner's work; but what of the lens that is in the eye, and the box that holds the brain? The artist who would truly *see* Nature must look at her works with the eyes that she has given him, and not see her at second-hand by the intervention of a glass lens and a mahogany camera.

Unspeakably important to every student — and the artist is *always* a student — is the great question of culture.

I hold culture so precious that hardly any sacrifice is to be refused that may tend to its attainment, nor any advantage accepted which impedes the pursuit of it. And artist sought to remember that, as in most things a definite price has to be paid for any assistance photography can give, and that this price must be paid in the precise form most fatal to ultimate success. I do not speak of expensive chemicals, of nitrate of silver, and chloride of gold; I speak of what is incomparably more precious than either silver or gold, the knowledge of nature. Every piece of hard study a painter does from nature, however worthless in itself, has compelled him to observe natural facts which the photograph does not recognize and cannot render; and every time a painter *substitutes* photography for nature, as a source of instruction, he misses many truths, inures himself to many falsities, and pays for the convenience of having the photograph in the next print-shop instead of travelling to see nature, in something more ruinous than coin, — he pays for it with part of his own faculties. Indolence, in whatever shape, lays this terrible tax upon us, that it will be paid for *out of ourselves*. For every hour's work that we avoid through indolence is so much strength lost to us; and though there *is* a help which benefits us, there is another kind of help which only debilitates us. Now, photography will help a painter in either of these ways, according to his own choice. If he refers to it quite independently and intelligently for the mere refreshment of his memory, it will really be of great use to him, and do him no manner of harm; but if he puts his trust in it when he ought to trust nature alone, if he blindly relies upon it to save himself the trouble of working and learning from nature, it will put poison and death into all his best and noblest faculties.

If an artist takes photographic memoranda for himself, what process ought he to employ?

A great many processes have been employed by different photographers since the days of Niepce, but of these, three only concern us, — the wet collodion, the waxed paper, and the dry collodion.

The wet collodion is scarcely eligible for an artist's own practice on account of its well-known uncertainty, and the cumbersome apparatus it requires; and because it is necessary to excite the film immediately before exposure, and to develop the image, and fix it, immediately after, so that it always consumes a great deal of *daylight* time, far more than anybody would think who only considered the few seconds or minutes of actual exposure. There are circumstances, however, where it is worth while to employ the wet collodion.

When a painter is collecting memoranda for a *large* picture, — a picture of sufficient value and importance to make it worth his while to take a great deal of trouble in obtaining records of every fact in the scene which may be of use to his great work, — it will repay him to set up on the spot a complete photographic and artistic camp, in which one tent or hut would be exclusively devoted to the photographic department. With such preparations, but not conveniently without them, it is possible to pursue the wet collodion process; and about a dozen negatives of different degrees of exposure, *which exposure is not to be regulated according to photographers' rules, but according to the painter's wants*, would afford the artist a mine of facts for reference.

For travelling and sketching artists, on the other hand, who do not collect memoranda for some especial work, but merely to enrich their collections at home, the wet collodion process is altogether unsuitable. When you work in wet collodion, you must be content to sacrifice a whole day to it at once. Now, travelling artists seldom give more than two days to one place, and they could not sacrifice one of them to photography. Such artists, if they employ photography at all, require some process which will allow of the separation of the different operations, so that the exposure alone shall occupy daylight time, whilst the preparation and development may be done by candlelight at home, on the preceding and subsequent evenings.

The waxed paper process offers this advantage. After

doing a good day's work in drawing from nature, a painter may prepare his sheets of waxed paper, and render them sensitive; then put them by in a portfolio, and the next day get a few photographic memoranda by exposing his papers in the camera in the intervals of work. He merely transfers the exposed papers to another portfolio, without troubling himself about development, which he does afterwards at home in the evening. All this sounds wonderfully convenient; but as I have practically tried it with much perseverance, I may be allowed to indicate a few drawbacks.

The paper process is objectionable for several reasons. 1st. The sheets do not retain their full degree of sensibility long enough to be very convenient; for I have found in practice that more than one-half of them were lost on account of the weather, which did not always allow of their being used whilst still serviceable. 2d. The time of exposure is so long as to make the process useless for what is transitory in nature; so that it is impossible to obtain a good paper negative, even of foliage except in the very calmest weather, when the leaves will remain quiet for twenty minutes or half an hour together. This length of exposure, too, makes the process costly in point of time. 3d. The negative, when obtained is seldom sufficiently minute in detail to be of more use than a careful drawing. 4th. The idea that the development costs no daylight time merely because it is done in the night is fallacious. I used to find it impossible to do any good early on a summer's morning, after having been kept out of bed the greater part of the night to watch the slow development of a series of negatives. In camp, this interruption to the night's repose is intolerable. After working hard all day, an unbroken sleep is necessary to the success of the morrow's labor, and the candlelight time of the night will be paid for in the daylight time of the morning—it could not be paid for more dearly.

The dry collodion remains. This process is now generally adopted for landscape, on account of advantages

similar to those possessed by the waxed paper, and two important advantages which the waxed paper does *not* possess. A glass plate, with a film of dry collodion upon it, will keep fit for use during a very long time—for twelve months certainly—without any appreciable diminution of sensitiveness. It will also afford great delicacy of detail.

I have not yet practised this process myself, and am, consequently, not qualified to speak from experience, as I did with regard to the two preceding processes; but it seems to me the most eligible one for a painter, because it admits of a complete division of labor, by which all the chemical work may be allotted to a practical chemist, and the choice of subject and exposure of the plate alone reserved for the artist. By this system I could have plates sent here from London, already sensitive and fit for exposure, at any time during twelve months. After having exposed them, I could return them to London and have them developed in the laboratory, where they were rendered sensitive. Thence they would be forwarded to a printer of positives, who would print me a positive or two from each plate: so that by this perfect division of labor, the only time I should have to expend would be the five minutes of exposure; and the only apparatus I need ever burden myself with would be a folding camera and a box of sensitive plates.

Whatever photographic process an artist may pursue, I hold it, however, quite a settled question that he ought never to print his own positives. There are plenty of positive printers in London who will do it for him on reasonable terms, and so relieve him of an unnecessary burden of labor.

Since few artists are likely to practise photography for themselves, it is as an independent art that it is likely to influence ours. Let us see how far that influence is likely to extend.

I concede the title of "art" to photography, but not in its highest sense. The photographer is so hampered by conditions that he cannot be an artist in the true sense,

because he does not enjoy the least intellectual freedom. He is rather the slave of the camera than its master; and though great skill and science are needed to serve the camera well, the *soul* of the photographer has nothing to do with the result; and makes no farther communication to the spectator than this simple one: "I, such an one, chose this subject."

I have said already how much I rejoice in the passing away of the old jealousy with which photography used to be regarded by painters. And the better its peculiar powers are understood and applied, the less chance will there be that these feelings of jealousy can ever possess any but the most ignorant and incapable artists. For my own part, though knowing as a painter only can know, how far the photograph falls short of that absolute natural truth which thoughtless people are so ready to attribute to it, I hold the science precious in a thousand ways. It would take a whole volume to recount the services which photography has already rendered to the world, and another to foretell some of its most obvious future benefits; but, as I am concerned here only with its relation to the art of painting, I shall endeavor to point out one or two of the principal reasons why we artists ought to be truly grateful to the illustrious men who discovered it, and to those scarcely less illustrious laborers who have brought it to its present marvellous state of perfection.

First of all, photography has relieved painters of nearly all the soulless drudgery they used to have to go through formerly, and so has wonderfully elevated them as artists by *defining the true sphere of their work*. For the question which photography is making everybody ask, "What is the good of painting?" is precisely the question which everybody in England *must* ask, and get answered satisfactorily, before there is any chance of our art taking its due place amongst the occupations of men. When I show my photographs to people who do not care for art, I observe that they often ask this question,—a question which, I on my part, find it very difficult to answer in a manner, and within limits which must be polite and not didactic. How

shall I answer it here? How shall the true answer to it ever be given in one sentence, or page, or chapter, or volume? For to answer this question rightly would be to explain *the whole art of painting*, a matter of some magnitude and one not easily set forth in words, however well arranged.

Here is an abstract of the answer, however, not likely to be very satisfactory, I fear, to the people who usually ask the question, yet the best I can find just now.

The good of painting is that it represents the *relations* of truths of nature (1st) to each other, and (2d) to the heart and intellect of man.

Photography represents facts isolated from their natural companions, and without any hint of their relation to the human mind.

Now it is only the *unity of relation* that can satisfy the artistic sense, not isolated fragments; and, therefore, so long as the artistic sense remains in the human organization, the demand for pictures will certainly continue.

I wish I could make perfectly clear what is that *unity of relation* which is so satisfactory to the artistic sense; but that, in these limits, is impossible. It is enough to say here that any perfect "whole" in a pictorial representation of nature must include delicate colors and beautiful forms, *all helping each other to the utmost*, like a chorus of well-trained singers, and that in the arrangement of it all a great human soul must manifest itself, just as the soul of Handel does in a chorus from the Messiah.

But in the photograph we have only a fact or two clearly stated, but not in their natural connection with other facts; far less in their deeper and more mysterious connection, which the genius of great imaginative artists is alone able to apprehend.

Therefore the division of labor likely to take place between photography and painting is this. Photography will record *isolated facts* of which an infinite number always need recording. Painting will concern itself with the *relations* of associated truths and beauties.

And let each keep to its own task. The photograph can

never successfully encroach on the province of painting; and henceforth let us hope that painters will never again commit the rash imprudence of attempting to intrude upon the peculiar domain of the photograph.

In the few instances where photographers have attempted to produce something resembling historical pictures, by arranging models and furniture, and photographing the *tableaux vivants* so obtained, the effect produced on the spectator was always the simple fact that he was looking at a photograph of dressed-up models and carefully arranged furniture; any thing farther from a true picture it would be impossible to conceive. The *naïveté* of the mistake on which this spurious art was founded is really amusing. The photographers fancied that the painters merely copied their models, and so thought it easy to rival them. Why, even the very severest and most rigid pre-Raphaelites use the model as little more than a stimulus, an authority, or a suggestion. Copy the model indeed! I should like to know where on earth Hunt could have found a woman capable of assuming and retaining that marvellous expression of beatitude that illuminates the sweet face of Mary when she finds Jesus in the Temple. That expression, which is the most mighty thing in the whole picture, — the mightiest, I mean, over the hearts of all men and women who can really feel any thing, — was gotten out of the painter's own soul, not from any hired model whatever. And the other intense expression of maternal love in the "Rescue," by Millais, whence came it? From the model, think you, or from the mind of the painter? And not only expression, but even the subtle play of delicate line in the works of the great designers, — even that is not copyism, nor to be got at by copyism such as the camera may rival.

I need not do more than refer in this place to the odious vulgarity of the common stereoscopic scenes of domestic life: the weddings and christenings, where a sham clergyman in a pasteboard church unites a neatly shaven model husband to a modest model wife; or a

miserable infant, which at the tender age of three months has commenced its professional career as a model, is held for the hundredth time at a sham font to be christened by the same dreary sham clergyman who officiated at the sham wedding. We will leave these abominations to prosper in peace, which, being intensely vulgar, they are very sure to do, under the patronage of a discriminating public.

And, on the other hand, what a lamentable waste of labor it is when artists forget all about the mutual relation of things, to copy unmeaning details in long months of labor, which any good photographer would obtain in infinitely greater perfection with an exposure of as many minutes! The mere fact that photography does this sort of work so unapproachably well, should be enough of itself to warn our young painters from engaging in it. Anybody who wants a plain fact about a piece of cliff or castle-wall can get it in a photograph for a few shillings: then why should he spend pounds for a picture which will give him nothing more? But the relation of the castle or the cliff to the heaven above or the water beneath, and to the minds of men — the significant stains of color upon it, the grandeur of its enduring strength, the deep human feelings that it ought to kindle in the spectator's heart — these things are the exclusive domain of the painter, and he should never sacrifice the least of these to mere literal fidelity of detail.

Some attempts have been made lately by our most observant and laborious young painters to *mirror* nature with absolute accuracy. I have tried for this myself, and tried hard too; but on comparing carefully the results I obtained with those given by the photograph, I felt that our two paths lay in quite different directions. What I honestly meant for simple topographic painting, and believed to be such, I discovered on comparing it with photographs of the same subjects to be any thing but literally accurate, *though it seemed to me, and to everybody else, much more like the scene than the photograph.*

But all really accurate mirror painting would, in outline at least, exactly coincide with photography. And I see some reason to doubt whether it was ever intended that men should devote their lives to this work of the mirror, since Nature has given us this wonderful science of photography, as it seems expressly for this very purpose.

The service rendered by the stereoscope in the recording of facts is much greater than people are ordinarily aware of. In all photographs except stereoscopic ones, there is a certain *unnatural* confusion in their flatness, an uncertainty as to whether one detail is nearer to the spectator than another. This uncertainty painters avoid by wilful exaggeration of relief, and other artifices; but the stereoscope removes it altogether, by making us see two distinct images of the same object at once from different points of view, exactly as we do in looking at Nature from the two different windows of our two eyes; the consequence of which is, that we grasp the details by the two sides and detach them from the general confusion of mere flat one-eyed vision, such as the ordinary photograph gives us. The stereoscope renders then a very peculiar and valuable service to photography, by making it infinitely more *legible* as a record of fact; and I do not believe that a painted record of any mere fact of form, however delicately done, can ever equal a shilling stereoscopic slide. I am not speaking here of color, because color is so changeable as not to be very desirable in plain mirror-like copyism of facts. We are not now speaking of beauty nor of feeling, two things belonging almost exclusively to fine art: we are speaking of the authentic recording of facts of permanent interest; and I mean to say, *not* that color is not precious, — for no painter could think that, — but that, as a fact of permanent interest, perfect accuracy in the masonry of a building may be of more consequence than the color of its mosses.

Now, as a record of plain ordinary matters of fact, the photograph is perfectly reliable, and all *good* painting is unreliable. You cannot, for instance, when looking at the

most labored picture on the walls of the Academy, be quite sure that, if you count the stones in a castle-wall, you will ascertain the number of real stones in the real castle-wall; on the contrary, you may be quite sure that no such degree of accuracy is to be got from any painter. But a photograph would have given you the fact quite precisely. And in this quality of perfect reliableness for plain every-day facts lies the peculiar value of the photographic art. It cannot give us one picture, but it will give us millions of most reliable memoranda containing an infinite amount of useful information. It cannot give the most precious truths of nature, but there is no testimony so trustworthy for large classes of ordinary facts, such as all the world wants.

The discovery of photography was contemporaneous with the immense increase of a certain want which it perfectly supplied. A kind of art was wanted which should record simple facts, and do it cheaply. A poor soldier's wife can now get a more authentic miniature of her husband for one shilling, than a rich lady could have procured a century ago for a hundred pounds. An emigrant in Australia can have a picture of his father's house, with every well-known and beloved detail, for less money than a common artist would charge for a bad pencil sketch. An architectural student can buy reliable records of every building of any consequence in Europe for a few shillings each, any one of which is of more value to him than a whole library of engravings. A mechanic may get for the price of an evening's carouse at the alehouse a portrait of his favorite engine on the nearest railway, done in a few seconds, on a bit of glass varnished with collodion, and that so marvellously, that the most exquisite Dutch picture is as coarse as a Haydon in comparison; and so strict and rigid in its accuracy of hard, exact, mechanical detail, that the best draughtsman in England might have toiled for months without approaching its microscopic fidelity. A landed proprietor living at a distance from his estate may easily inform himself of the condition of his farm-buildings, and of the progress of external repairs and

alterations, by commissioning a photographer to send him from time to time a photographic report, which cannot possibly be falsified by his agent; and an emperor may inform himself, by weekly photographs, of the progress of public works in the remotest corners of his empire, and see, stone by stone, the growth of every fortress on his frontier.

Photography fears no labor, and is not fastidious. With good atmospheric conditions and pure chemicals, it does not in the least signify to the photographic camera, whether you set it to copy a Lancashire factory, or a sculptured cathedral; it will do either the one or the other accurately, but with utter indifference. Photography has neither feeling nor choice; it is an unconscious slave, dead to all affection. Therefore it does well and thoroughly all that heartless, mindless work, which the old topographic draughtsmen used to do so badly and inadequately; for if it has no affections, it has no repugnances, and will copy the ugliest house in England, and give you every foolish ornament, as if it were a gem of sculpture from a frieze of Phidias. In short, it will do precisely that kind of unintellectual, but accurate copyism of miscellaneous objects, which a true artist has no business with, and neither betray the impatience of the painter, nor the mockery of the caricaturist.

By doing this drudgery cheaper than it can be done by hand, the direct tendency of Photography is to elevate the position of the painter, since it restricts him more and more to the intellectual fields of art, and must lead, sooner or later, to a truer definition of his calling.

As a means of art education, its influence on the public is salutary. In spite of all its falsities, photography is the best teacher of the first element of criticism,—the knowledge of the Facts of Form. It also supplies, what was very much wanted, a court of appeal whose impartiality is unimpeachable. On such matters of fact as the structure of a particular kind of rock, or the ramification of some definite species of tree, it is now frequently possible to decide a question by reference to a pho-

tograph which formerly would have remained open to unceasing dispute.

Photography can neither color nor compose ; therefore color and composition in painting will be felt to be more precious than ever, and the lovers of intellectual art will prize its peculiar attributes yet more highly when they come to perceive the immense distance which these two mighty powers place between it and all photographic imitations of nature.

As a reproducer of works of real art Photography is very precious. How inimitably it renders the magnificent sculpture of the noblest Gothic architecture, the character of every statue being so perfectly given, without the intervention of any second person's feeling, that it is just as good to see one of these photographs as the thing itself, and travelling for architectural study becomes almost needless. And then the precious details of mouldering stones that no painter would ever copy with reverence enough ; their texture rendered, as our art can never hope to render texture, not by coarse dragging of opaque color over sticky surfaces of varnish, but by fair honest drawing, inconceivably minute, of every microscopic shadow cast by the projecting grains of rough stone. I have one of these photographs before me. It is of the great central doorway of Amiens Cathedral, taken obliquely, so as to show that half of the arch that the sunshine fell upon, whilst the other is not seen, being too much foreshortened for its details to be easily distinguished, even if they were not lost in a black depth of exaggerated shade. There is, consequently, rather more than one-half of the sculpture visible. Now, in the visible part, I have just counted *thirteen great statues, and a hundred and forty smaller figures, without including those in twenty-six bas-reliefs*. Here is a whole collection of the best and noblest fine art in the world, placed by photography within everybody's reach for a few francs. I remember how Mr. Ruskin, in his pamphlet on pre-Raphaelitism, after alluding with some bitterness and much justice to the general silliness of our painters in their choice of subject, sent

the reader to a broken bas-relief at Lincoln to see if his heart would not break too. And now in these few short years nearly all the best old bas-reliefs in Europe have been mirrored for us marvellously by collodion ; and the great want that made the hearts of all true lovers of noble architecture ache with grief and pain, is at last most richly and abundantly satisfied. The photographers have done this for us all ; let us warmly express our thanks and appreciation.

For the reproduction of pictures many persons, and one impersonal but not the less powerful entity, the *Times* newspaper prefer photography to engraving. There is, of course, the fatal objection about the insensibility to yellow rays in the negative, with the result that what is yellow in the picture comes black in the positive, so that a golden sunset cannot be photographed at all ; and although a yellow dress in a figure picture may be of less consequence, it is nevertheless certain that the arrangement of light and shade in pictures containing yellow will always be lost in the photograph. But to balance this the advocates of photography insist with much truth on the absolute fidelity with which it renders the touch peculiar to each painter, and also the unapproachable perfection of its rendering of expression. The present state of the question appears to be this : pictures that will translate tolerably into photography are photographed, whilst the others are let alone for the present. Mr. Ruskin thinks that photography will supersede engraving, but not engravers, who, he believes, will find easier and more agreeable employment in translating pictures into black and white pen drawings, to be afterwards reproduced by the photograph. By this intervention of the draughtsman, we should have a gain and a loss, — the gain in the truth of light and shade, no longer revolutionized by the photograph's exclusive sensibility to actinic rays ; the loss in the authentic and *autographic* qualities of touch and expression. A third, and far more perfect way in which paintings by living artists might be multiplied for the public, would be if *they*, and not the

engravers, did the translation into light and shade, the pen drawing, which might be afterwards fac-similed by the photograph. Thus, by a procedure more certain, and better within command than etching, original and authentic work, of first-rate quality, might become attainable at a very moderate price. The engravers would, of course, still be necessary for the interpretation of all dead artists, and of such living ones as were too much occupied with painting to have time or inclination for this pen drawing.

Painters who are accustomed to design a carefully finished cartoon in black and white before beginning to paint, may, at any rate, have their cartoons perfectly reproduced by photography without the intervention of any draughtsman or engraver; and such reproductions are so perfectly autographic as to possess a far higher value than any kind of engraving. The only objection to this is, that the cartoon is never so minutely careful in execution as the finished picture.

In favor of the photographic reproductions of oil-pictures it is right to observe that, although entirely false in all such light and dark as depends upon color, they are far nearer to the picture in the reproduction of its light than photographs taken from nature are to natural light. There are, at any rate, in photographs from pictures, none of those great spaces of white or black vacancy which distress and dissatisfy us so much in photographs from nature. Does the reader imagine that a photograph from nature is any truer in its translation of color? Does he fancy, as I find some photographers do, that the photographic rendering of pictures *alone* is false in this respect, whilst the photographic interpretation of nature is true? It is astonishing to hear the objection continually raised against photographs from pictures, that they do not translate their color truly into black and white as an engraving does, but change all its arrangements, when the very people who make the objection accept the photographic translation of *Nature's* coloring as trustworthy. I suppose it is because they have only looked at celebrated pictures, and have never really looked

at any natural scene ; but to anybody who *has*, the photographic interpretation of nature is considerably less satisfactory than its interpretation of art.

With reference to drawings and etchings the objection about actinic rays does not hold ; and the importance of photography as a means of reproducing the most precious uncolored works of elder art, is now fully recognized, especially by artists. I have one or two of Raphael's drawings, so perfectly reproduced that even the texture of the paper Raphael used is accurately imitated on the smooth albumen of the positive, and every stain of it too. I remember how much Mr. Leslie used to enjoy a set of photographs he had from Rembrandt's etchings, and how thoroughly he appreciated the value of photography as an authentic reproducer of such works. The photographic reproductions of free sketches by great men are quite above all competition by means of engraving.

The conclusions we have arrived at in the course of this inquiry may be briefly summed up as follows : —

Photography and painting are for ever independent of each other, and there is no manner of rivalry possible between them. Each has its own path.

Painting does not need the help of photography, and in practice can be little served by it, except for occasional reference.

Because painting deals with truths not attainable by photography, as the relations of light and color, and the imaginative interpretation as opposed to the literal imitation of nature.

Nevertheless, photographic memoranda of isolated facts may, when intelligently consulted, be of much utility to painters.

To art in general photography has rendered several inestimable services.

First, by relieving it of the drudgery of detailing commonplace facts where imagination and feeling are not wanted, and a sense of beauty would only inflict unprofitable suffering on an artist who could not find any thing to satisfy it.

And as leading, consequently, to a clearer understanding on the part of the public of the nature of fine art as distinguished from unintelligent copyism.

And as affording a sound basis for criticism by putting within everybody's reach an encyclopædia of the rudimentary facts of nature.

And lastly, by reproducing works of real art in an authentic and reliable manner.

VI.

WORD PAINTING AND COLOR PAINTING.

THE comparison between words and colors, as means for the expression of artistic ideas, has for a long time possessed a great attraction for me; and as it is a matter which very closely concerns all workers in literature and painting, I intend here to offer such results as I have been able to arrive at; so far, at least, as they may influence the practical labors of those who write or paint.

If we examine a single coat of arms, we shall at once perceive that its describability is due entirely to artistic poverty.

“Paly wavy of six, or and azure, a lion rampant pean, on a chief gules, three crosses fleury ermine.”

I have selected the most elaborate coat I can recollect. If I had chosen the most simple, as, for instance, “Argent a bend sable,” the artistic poverty would have been more evident. But a shield of fifty quarterings is infinitely poorer, artistically, than the commonest natural object, and therefore infinitely easier to describe.

For, first of all, there is no gradation in heraldry. The colors are all crude; *or*, *azure*, and *gules* merely mean gold leaf, ultramarine, and vermilion, just as they come from the colorman’s.

And again, the variety in the forms is finite; it is even exceedingly limited. “Paly wavy of six”—a herald knows at once what *that* means; he has drawn it a hundred times. “A lion rampant”—the creature and its three or four attitudes are kept in stock in every heraldic mind ready for immediate application. And the cross fleury being a rigid, conventional form, is as easy to remember as the + in algebra.

Let us see whether we can make an equally accurate description of some similar objects in nature.

"Paly wavy or and azure." There is often wavy or and azure in sunset skies amongst the upper clouds; but, as every curve in it is full of unexpected and indescribable changes, and every hue of it full of infinite, and most subtle, and most inexplicable gradations, how *can* words ever blazon this Divine heraldry at all? There are lions enough in Africa yet, in spite of English rifles; but no words can perfectly picture the least of their mighty movements. "Pean," "ermine," "gules," "or," and "azure!" good enough for the splendor of lordly pride; but not good enough for one wreath of perishing cloud, nor one feather in a wild duck's wing!

Now all good writers who ever lived have frankly confessed the impossibility of accurate description of natural scenery in words. Good writers scarcely ever attempt it. Their descriptions, even when most elaborate, are no more than stimulants to the reader's imagination, rather trying to make him imagine a scene for himself than vainly endeavoring to convey to him a truthful picture of something he has not seen. All word description that goes beyond this, though it may be highly accurate and ingenious, is, so far as the reader is concerned, positively useless.

For the accurate realization of a complex word description, even if it were possible, which it is not, would require an effort of the intellect so enormous that not one mind in a million would be capable of it, unless previously trained for years to practical landscape painting.

Even the best word painting of our own day, whenever it reaches a certain point of elaboration, is probably only comprehensible by devoted students of nature, and *they* always realize something else than the object described.

Word painting of the human figure seems easier than that of landscape, because the varieties of human form are restrained within more definite limits than the varieties of mountains and clouds. But it is an error to suppose that words are capable of any thing like accuracy even in figure

painting. The *signalement* attached to an ordinary French passport is a kind of description where a rigidly prosaic accuracy would be really of use, and is seriously attempted. The object, of course, is to render the passport not transferable. But passports are transferable, notwithstanding the *signalement*, and are very frequently transferred. A young French lady, whom I know, was travelling very lately with a passport which she might have transferred to almost any other young French lady of her age and complexion; and as her complexion is the most usual in France, her passport would have been available for most of her young friends in case of an emergency. A simple expedient is now open to continental governments which would effectually render passports non-transferable. A government has only to require that a photographic portrait of the bearer of every passport be printed from a glass negative upon the paper of the passport itself, and the passport would be of use to nobody but its owner. That is to say, a government which desires to have the *signalements* on its passports accurate must abandon word painting, which *cannot* be accurate.

As an illustration of the difficulty of conveying a true image of anybody by words, take the common case of a child who has lost its mother at birth. If no portrait of the mother exists, that child has no chance of ever getting to know what she was like. All the neighbors know; all the child's elder relations know; he is never tired of asking questions about his mother, and they answer all his questions as well as they can; but they cannot, by means of words, transfer to his brain the image of her which exists so vividly in their own; and he goes on through life, actually surrounded by a thousand truthful portraits of his mother, impressed on the brains of his friends and contemporaries, not one of which, in spite of all his ardent longing, will he ever be permitted to see.

The art of word painting has its secrets. Its first law is brevity. It is not possible to produce, with an elaborate word-picture, that single-stroke effect which makes the power of an elaborate color-picture. For a long word

description must first be read from beginning to end before there is any chance of a perfect image being produced by it; and then the reader must gather up and fit together all the parts of it like a child's puzzle-map — no easy matter, especially for indolent or half-interested readers. It is on this account that long word descriptions are generally so terribly fatiguing, and make such exhausting demands on the reader's energy.

2. The next secret is to attempt nothing that words are manifestly incapable of doing. It is needless to aim at accuracy. Very rude, broad, imperfect sketching is all that words are fit for. To try after imitative accuracy is a mere waste of time, and is certain to make the reader skip the passage, if he does not shut the book.

The object of the word painter being to make the reader imagine a scene for himself, he must profoundly understand the capacity of ordinary people's imaginations, and take good care not to go beyond it.

3 The commonest trick of famous and clever word painters is to dazzle people by sounding phrases and brilliant metaphors into the belief that they have really received a very noble impression, when the whole force of the impression, if analyzed, would be found to be due to the music of the sentences and the splendor of the metaphors, *not* to the natural scene which is the pretext for them.

Our best modern English word painters are, amongst the poets, Tennyson, Shelley, Byron, Scott, Wordsworth, and Keats, in order of excellence.

And of prose writers, Ruskin stands quite alone; then after him, but at a great distance, come about a dozen others whom it is needless to particularize.

Of all these I give to Tennyson the first place. Even Ruskin, the best prose word painter who ever lived, says that no description of his is worth four lines of Tennyson.

Tennyson seems to me to understand the limitations of word painting better than any other man. There is not the slightest straining after unattainable fidelities in any one of his descriptions. They go no farther than the

limits of the art allow ; and they are always exquisite as far as they go. This is the highest praise that can be given to any artist, because it implies his perfect conception of the boundaries of his art, and his mastery over all that lies within those boundaries.

Shelley's painting has a remarkable resemblance to Turner's, which I think no critic has hitherto pointed out. There are the same splendor, color, and mystery ; the same love of clouds and water ; the same unreality and abstraction. It seems to me that if Shelley had given himself a pictorial instead of a literary training, he might, if he had lived, have rivalled Turner on his own ground.

Byron's word painting is too passionate to be in any way accurate. It owes all its power to fire of language and strength of imagery. The reader is never really moved by the scene described, but by the vivid images and allusions it calls forth from the poet.

Scott's descriptions are affectionate and often very spirited in their way, but not always artistic. They are seldom pictorially conceived. They harmonize, however, very well with the vigorous human action of his characters. His view of nature, though he seems to have enjoyed color, was perhaps rather that of a sportsman happy to be out in the open air than that of a devoted student of landscape.

Keats might have made an excellent word painter if he had lived ; but I do not share Mr. Ruskin's too humble veneration for what he actually wrote. His words are often very cleverly fitted in quaint odd ways, and do, no doubt, attain a peculiar power which I dare say would be difficult to imitate, if it were desirable, which it certainly is not. Mr. Ruskin himself is, when a little excited, a much better writer of English than Keats, in his brief career, ever came to be.

Wordsworth knew more of natural scenery than any other writer not also a painter — knew as much, I should say, as many a professed landscape painter ; but as an artist in words he attempted too much. I, who am a

painter and who know the scenery Wordsworth described, can vouch for the delicate truthfulness of his descriptions. They contain evidences of observation very rare in literature; but they are without effect on readers ignorant of landscape, because they require powers of memory and imagination in the reader, which no reader who is not a profound observer of nature can possibly possess.

Mr. Ruskin's art of description in prose is in every way wonderful. He complained somewhere that his readers missed the arguments in his books, and dashed at the descriptions. A novel complaint truly! What author but Mr. Ruskin ever found his descriptions dangerously seductive? Other people's descriptions are skipped habitually by the prudent reader. Mr. Ruskin's, it appears, do positive injury to the graver and more argumentative parts of his writings. He is decidedly the first author who has made landscape description too attractive. And when we try to get at the reason for this attractiveness in his word-pictures, we very soon see that it is mainly owing to an unusual magnificence of language, and a studied employment of metaphor.

Charlotte Brontë was by no means a weak sketcher in words: many of her descriptions prove great literary power. They are more concentrated than Mr. Ruskin's, but neither so profound nor so grandly conceived.

Thackeray has great and stirring powers of description, which he too seldom exercises.

Marian Evans does really good landscape sketching, of an intensely truthful character. There are no better quiet pictures in their way in any literature than the brief ones which occur in "Adam Bede," and the "Mill on the Floss."

George Sand has a passionate love for nature, with the intensest feeling. She understands the *expression* of landscape, and renders it with great power. Her interest in landscape seems to strengthen as she grows older, her latest novels being remarkable for their evidence of close and recent observation of nature. Her descriptions are

thoroughly masterly and artistic, and I rank them very high as specimens of what may be done with words.

Lamartine's are less passionate, more contemplative, more elaborately worked out as a whole, less elaborately perhaps in the most essential and significant details. In his prose they often become extremely tiresome, but never in his verse, whose exquisite construction carries the reader on.

Of these writers I will take Tennyson, giving extracts from him only, for the limits of my space would not allow of an adequate study of the others.

And first, I am sorry to say, the Tennyson pictures are by no means numerous. There are scarcely fifty of them in all. So little faith has this prince of poet landscapists in the powers of verbal art, that he employs it very rarely and very briefly.

The first that occur are in "Mariana."

With blackest moss the flower-plots
Were thickly crusted, one and all:
The rusted nails fell from the knots
That held the peach to the garden-wall.
The broken sheds look'd sad and strange:
Unlifted was the clinking latch;
Weeded and worn the ancient thatch
Upon the lonely moated grange.

Here there is no attempt at form, and little at color. The moss is simply all described as *blackest*. This is near enough for poetry; but a painter knows that this black moss would, in nature, be full of purples and greys infinitely various. The gradations in the moss on the flower-plots are not so much as alluded to, for a volume of description would not have conveyed them to the reader's mind. The sadness and strangeness of the broken sheds may, however, be mentioned verbally, because these are mental feelings, which are the peculiar province of language. It is not the broken sheds that are in themselves sad, but their appearance excites that feeling in the poet, who conveys the feeling to his reader when he could not

possibly convey the form. The extreme slightness of the description of the grange itself is equally apparent: it is lonely, and moated, and thatched, and the thatch is out of repair — no more.

Now, let us suppose that I were to select this subject for a picture; what then? As Tennyson treats it slightly in words, can I also treat the subject with equal slightness on canvass?

No. Because the art of color painting is so infinitely superior to the art of word description that far more is required of it, and it *cannot* be so rude and imperfect if it would. I have already pointed out the impossibility of painting moss as rudely as Tennyson describes it. For his blackest moss I must set an elaborate palette of purples and greys, with perhaps one touch of real black on one of the nearer flower-plots; whereas he blackens them all alike, superlatively and indiscriminately, as if there were no such thing as gradation in the world.

And then the *forms* of the mosses? Every patch of moss *must*, in a picture, have a form of some sort; for in nature every patch of moss has an outline designed on the object it attaches itself to, which is not less delicate and elaborate than the outline of England on the sea. Tennyson, of course, takes care not to talk about the forms of the mosses; he is too much of an artist to waste his words. A poem the length of "Paradise Lost" would not describe accurately the form of the mosses on one of the flower-plots. And the plots themselves; how many were there of them? Tennyson did not count them: saw the flower-plots in the vision, but took no heed of their number. But in my picture my flower-plots must of necessity be countable, and I must decide how many I will put. No answer from the poet. But the painter cannot avoid these details. His superior power of description is accompanied by the need of larger and more accurate knowledge.

And the garden-wall, what were its height and length? Was it of brick or of stone? And the broken sheds; ruinous we see, but how large were they, how shaped, and on

what side of the house were they situated? And then the most important thing of all, the grange. Not one word of architectural detail. The reader is to imagine, as he best can, a moated grange, — any old house with a ditch round it will do. Tennyson knew that the imaginative reader would make a very good moated grange for himself, and that the dull, unimaginative reader would never be able to realize the most elaborate description, so it was of no use to attempt one. But no painting could possibly be so vague. A house in a picture *must* have definite architectural forms.* They cannot be dispensed with. And the painter here, as in every thing else, requires hard knowledge of forms and colors, where the poet will satisfy us with a sweet sounding word.

The fourth stanza of "Mariana" contains a little detailed foreground picture in the pre-Raphaelite manner: —

About a stone-cast from the wall
 A sluice with blackened waters slept,
 And o'er it many, round and small,
 The cluster'd marish mosses crept.
 Hard by a poplar shook alway,
 All silver green with gnarled bark :
 For leagues no other tree did mark
 The level waste, the rounding gray.

It would have been difficult to compress more of Nature into so confined a compass of verse: but the reader will easily see for himself that a painter would either have to invent, or to seek out in Nature, a thousand details that the poet has not given us. The shape of the sluice is not mentioned, nor its size either, and the coloring of the marish mosses is not even hinted at. The poplar was silver green, but there are some millions of poplars in France, "all silver green, with gnarled bark," so that this does not amount to a description of any particular poplar. So one might say of an Academy model, that she was "all flesh color, with a smooth skin," but that would not amount to a recognizable portrait of the individual woman. The waste was level, and the horizon rounded the landscape

with gray ; but every artist knows that in the flattest, dull-est countries, there are no two landscapes alike, and yet this sketch is as general as that of the poplar, and is applicable to any treeless flat.

It is like the opening sketch in "The Dying Swan : " —

The plain was grassy, wild and bare,
Wide, wild, and open to the air,
Which had built up everywhere
An under-roof of doleful gray.

But this is made rather more definite in character by the distance, which is well put in, and true in effect : —

Some blue peaks in the distance rose,
And white against the cold white sky,
Shone out their crowning snows.

And the coloring of the mosses on the water is given this time : —

And far thro' the marish green and still
The tangled water-courses slept,
Shot over with purple, and green, and yellow.

A painter, however, would have to know *where* the purple and green and yellow were, and what proportion of the field of vision was occupied by each. And he would have to paint not merely *purple*, but a thousand varieties of it ; not merely *green*, but infinite gradations of bluish green, yellowish green, and green much neutralized by red ; not merely yellow, but delicate changes of gray and gold in the yellow. For the painter goes so infinitely beyond the writer in landscape, that the most detailed written pictures are almost as crude as heraldic blazoning in comparison with painters' work.

There are two magnificent lines in "Oriana : " —

When the long dun wolds are ribb'd with snow
And loud the Norland whirlwinds blow.

It would take a painter a month to realize the first line on canvas. When snow lies in the hollows of rough

land, it assumes outlines of a complexity quite infinite and exceedingly difficult to draw. It is all very well for a poet to say "ribb'd," and so have done with the difficulty, just as he would say of a ship's hull in process of construction, that it was "ribb'd," using the same word for both. And it is the very word which gives so much truth and value to the two capital lines which Wordsworth made for Coleridge, and which Coleridge used in the beginning of the fourth part of the "Ancient Mariner: " —

And thou art long, and lank, and brown,
As is the *ribbed* sea-sand.

The poets may use the same word for snow in mountain stream furrows, and sand corrugated by waves, but a painter could not render both with the same kind of work. In the one case, he would have to understand and declare an immense variety of facts concerning mountain anatomy, of which the poet might remain ignorant without injury to his verse, and, in the other case, a totally different order of facts concerning aqueous action on sand.

The "Lady of Shalott" opens with a charming description: —

On either side the river lie
Long fields of barley and of rye,
That clothe the wold and meet the sky;
And thro' the field the road runs by
 To many-tower'd Camelot;
And up and down the people go,
Gazing where the lilies blow
Round an island there below,
 The island of Shalott.

Willows whiten, aspens quiver,
Little breezes dusk and shiver
Thro' the wave that runs for ever
By the island in the river
 Flowing down to Camelot.
Four gray walls and four gray towers,
Overlook a space of flowers,
And the silent isle imbowers
 The Lady of Shalott.

This is the best and most perfect word-picture we have yet come upon. Yet there is not one form in it, and only the very slightest hint of color. The willows whiten, and the walls and towers are gray, that is all the coloring. Form there is none, except the *length* of the fields, if we allow that shapeless length is indeed form at all. We are told nothing of the height of the walls, nor of the sort of battlements upon them, nor, indeed, whether they *had* battlements. We are not even informed whether the towers were round or square. To form any idea, whatever, from such a description as this, it is necessary that the reader should set his own imagination vigorously to work, which, in fact, every reader does, according to his capacity, though in most instances unconsciously. When I analyze the picture that rises before me on reading these two stanzas, I find that I have little authority for it in Tennyson. It is a composition formed from memories of scenes I know. fitted together without the slightest regard for topography, For the fields I see are English, like the scenery of Kent; and the road is English; I confess to an anachronism in the road, for the one I see is most decidedly macadamized; but "many tower'd Camelot" is, in my dream, not English at all, but an old towered town on the Rhone, opposite Avignon, with a few more towers and no modern houses. The island of Shalott is one I remember on the Yonne. And the four gray walls and four gray towers are a reminiscence of Wales.

The peculiar powers and defects which distinguish word painting from color painting appear to be briefly these:—

Words describe the emotions of the spectator better than the scene he sees.

They convey mental impressions, not material forms.

Colors convey material forms more accurately than mental emotions.

Words are quite incapable of rendering form and color in any but the very rudest way. They may, however, indicate great delicacy of perception in the person who uses them.

Colors, in skilful hands, may be made to render form and hue so very accurately, that to have seen a good topographical picture of a place is almost as good as having seen the place itself.

Words may be very vague and still quite intelligible. As, for instance, you may say "the church had a tower," without so much as specifying whether the church was built of brick or stone, in Gothic or classical architecture; whether it was large or small, old or new; whether the tower were tall or short, had a spire or not, &c., &c.

Colors, on the other hand, *must* be definite, or they would cease to be intelligible. In a colored picture of a church the architecture must not only be stated, but worked out with some degree of detail, so that not only would the spectator be aware at once what the architecture and materials were, but he would receive an impression of a certain number of windows, &c.

Unless a word-picture is insufferably tedious, the facts conveyed by it will be very few.

A color-picture will record innumerable facts without becoming tiresome at all.

A word-picture, if long, cannot be combined into one whole without a great intellectual effort on the part of the reader.

A color-picture is combined into one whole by the artist, and the spectator cannot, if he would, see one part out of its relation to the other parts, whose influence it cannot escape.

Artists in words can reach more brilliant effects of light than artists in paint, because they recall the light of nature.

Artists in color are bound down to dingy white lead.

Artists in words help themselves out by acoustic description; as, for instance, they add to the force of a storm at sea by telling of the roar of the wind, the canvas rattling like musketry, the thunder pealing, and the breakers dashing against the cliffs with a report as of cannon.

Color art is silent.

Words may be true, because they go such a little way. It is quite true, for example, that Rouen Cathedral is a magnificent specimen of Gothic architecture.

But no picture of Rouen Cathedral ever was, or ever can be, so absolutely true as the above statement, because in all painting there must be innumerable little inaccuracies of detail, owing to the imperfection of human handiwork; and yet, in painting, this cannot be avoided, as in writing, by the total *omission* of detail, because in painting such omission is direct falsehood in itself.

The office of the word painter is to get people to look at art and nature, to pierce through their dulness and indifference with earnest and powerful language.

The office of the color painter is to give an idea of beautiful natural scenes to people living at a distance from them.

I had not space in this Essay to compare the pictorial and literary novel. I had intended to take Hogarth's "Marriage à la mode" as an example of what may be done in the pictorial novel on an elaborate scale, and Cruikshank's "Bottle" series as a pictorial tale. I should then have shown how far such works might be considered to contend with the literary novel in the delineation of character.

The subject of this Essay, if developed in all its branches, might very easily be made to fill a volume. For the sake of any reader who is interested enough in the matter to pursue it for himself, I will observe briefly:

That so far as the art of painting concerns itself with *man*, as a subject, it is undoubtedly inferior, and very far inferior, to written language.

For the art of painting renders the bodily shape and so much of mind as the body expresses, but language reveals the most secret thoughts.

Considered with reference to the body alone, painting is as superior to writing as it is in landscape.

But considered as interpretations of mental character,

written narratives are quite incomparably superior to any possible series of pictures.

Hogarth's famous series is as meagre, in comparison to one of Fielding's novels, as a word-picture by Tennyson to a pre-Raphaelite landscape.

We know the persons by *sight*, which is an advantage the novelists do not give us; but we know very little about them except their appearance.

People say that the character and history of each individual are written on his face, so that such pictures as Hogarth's ought to be as good a revelation of character as a novel by Thackeray.

Such an assertion as this betrays a total want of observation.

For, in ordinary life, does the aspect of a man, even when combined with the chief *visible* facts of his history, open for us his inner mind and life, and his secret history? Not in the least.

And are bodily appearances easy to interpret? I know an unlucky peasant who was endowed with a great red nose by nature: he is one of the most abstemious men in England, yet enjoys the reputation of being a drunkard, merely because his nose is red. If Hogarth had put him in a picture, Mr. Sala, and other commentators, would have moralized on "the drunkard's" nose.

To compare word painting and linear drawing in stories of human life it is only necessary to separate Thackeray's illustrations to "*Vanity Fair*" from the novel itself, and compare the two. The illustrations, without the novel, would hardly, I think, convey a very full or adequate idea of the characters.

Even Doyle's illustrations to "*The Newcomes*," which are much better, are weak in comparison to the words they illustrate. We could not guess the history and character of the Colonel merely from the pictures of him, still less Ethel's.

For the novelist has always this immense advantage over the painter, that he can make his characters utter

their own sentiments, and report to us the very words they used.

The men and women that painters represent are all dumb.

Again, the novelist can narrate a connected series of mental changes and circumstantial events, whose necessary development and final accomplishment may come about very gradually and slowly.

The painter, on the other hand, can only give us detached glimpses, each of one second of time.

This single-stroke effect, this concentration of the labor of months to realize the effect of a moment, and that upon a canvas which shall be comprehended at one glance, — a power which in landscape, gives the painter such an immense advantage over the writer with his tiresome *consecutiveness* of detail, — happens to be just as great a disadvantage in the delineation of character, where the literary process of consecutive revelation, not instantaneous illumination, is the process exactly suited to the purpose.

In landscape and human physical form, nearly all the advantages lie with color painting.

In illustrations of human *character*, all the advantages are on the side of the writer.

For colors paint *things* best, but words convey *thoughts* best.

VII.

TRANSCENDENTALISM IN PAINTING.

THE connection between the word "transcendental" as originally employed by Kant, and the same word as I employ it in the present chapter, may be briefly indicated before we consider the especial subject of the chapter itself.

Kant used the word to designate the class of ideas existing in the human mind independently of experience. Emerson calls all persons who rely on their own intuitions rather than on the experience of others, Transcendentalists. Transcendentalism in painting may be defined as the longing to realize artistic ideals hitherto existing only in the mind of the artist. Whether such an ideal is purely technical, as, for example, possible processes not hitherto employed; or artistic, in the restricted sense of compositions of an order for which there is no precedent; or scientific, as natural effects yet unrecorded, the transcendental tendency is to realize the dream and aspiration of the artist's own mind, rather than simply to reproduce the results of other people's experience.

The transcendental state of mind is therefore directly opposed to the whole feeling of the ordinary practical intellect. The transcendentalist takes no interest in the merely doing over again what others have done before him, but kindles into enthusiasm with the exciting hope of realizing his own ideal. The practical man has no faith in intuitions; does not believe in the possibility of any thing not yet actually done, and restricts all his action to the safe and mechanical reproduction of such ideas of other men as he has already seen embodied in material forms. The two classes of men — idealists and materialists — are equally

necessary to mankind, though necessary in very different proportions; and neither of these two classes has any right to despise the other.

The transcendentalists think much, but usually produce little; the materialists produce much, but do not, in the strict sense, *think* at all. The transcendentalists, however, are accustomed to maintain that by mere thinking they can increase their practical skill.

Thus it is said that Ole Bull, the celebrated Norwegian violinist, arrived at his most wonderful effects less by manual practice than meditation. He practised less, and thought more, than other violinists. This is quite in keeping with his reflections after hearing Paganini. Ole Bull actually sold his last shirt to hear that mighty master, and, having heard him, instead of saying like the crowd that nothing new was possible after that, began to seek after hitherto unknown effects that even Paganini had not discovered. Both these facts indicate clearly that Ole Bull was a musical transcendentalist, and his long retirement confirms it. A true transcendentalist dislikes publicity, and loves to cultivate himself in solitude.

No man has ever reached commanding eminence without some touch of transcendentalism. Even in great conquerors this spirit lurks and works. Their discontent with the extent of their territorial dominion, and eager desire to enlarge it, correspond to a similar feeling in the philosopher with regard to the boundaries of present intelligence. Conquerors are, in fact, the visible types and examples of the intellectual conquerors, and Napoleon is never so grand and commanding a figure as on the Alpine snow. Every transcendentalist thrills with pleasure when he hears of that passage of the Alps; for he also would cross the mighty barriers that bar him from the golden fields.

The English mind does not welcome the transcendental philosophy, because it prefers that sort of intellectual repose which permits the most energetic and continuous labor. Politically, the French are transcendentalists, and the English not. The most practical minds have no love for

this philosophy, because they instinctively perceive it to be a great hindrance to productiveness. It is impossible to produce so long as we only dream about what we ought to produce. This philosophy cannot become habitual either in nations or individuals without destroying productive energy. Its most salutary action is intermittent, by *epochs*. Transcendental epochs are necessary to progress, but they ought to leave us long intervals for hard, undoubting labor. Else all this fine philosophy would end in mere weak *wishing*, without the possibility of realization.

I have observed that in particular instances the abuse of this tendency of the intellect has resulted in a permanent state of intellectual lassitude and debility. It is, in fact, an abuse of the ideal, or imaginative faculty, and will naturally produce the same disastrous effects upon the mind that sensual excesses do upon the body. Habitual transcendentalists in thought are any thing but transcendental in action. They surpass nobody; and by waiting all their lives long before deciding what to do are easily distanced by persons of less imaginative power, but greater practical force. So this philosophy is at the same time useful to a man's ambition, and dangerous to it. With regard to the arts, and especially that of painting, I intend here to point out the advantages of transcendentalism, and to indicate its peculiar dangers.

In all labors there are three stages — the mechanical, or imitative; the transcendental or reflective; and the *intelligently* practical. I do not say, mind, that every laborer passes through all these stages. The vast majority stop at the first; a few reach the second; still fewer attain to the third.

It is obvious that to enter upon the second phase, that of reflection, a new order of faculties is needed. Every human being possesses in a greater or less degree the faculty of imitation, or the tendency to do what he has seen other people do. But the skeptical or examining faculty, that which *looks* (*σκέπτομαι*), is rarer, and it is this power which leads men into the second or reflective phase. And, difficult as it may be to enter this transcendental region, it is yet more

difficult to pass through it, out on the other side, into the third phase, the intelligently practical.

The men who remain always in the imitative stage are useful to society as copyists and reproducers of other men's thoughts. The men who get on as far as the second or reflective stage, and stop short there, are of no good to anybody that I see, except as a warning, and for their continual protest against low standards of criticism, and their dissatisfaction with all imperfect and inadequate performance. But persons who have reached the third phase, and are not only reflective but practical, usually achieve worthy results. They attain to the highest mark their several natures are capable of reaching. They are the best and swiftest workers. Henceforth they lose no time. Knowing the limits of art, they do not expect impossibilities. No unforeseen difficulty arrests them. Having learned from the transcendental philosophy the inadequacy of all means, and yet the exact degrees of utility and availableness of every material aid, and having lost the childish expectation of too great and too immediate results; having learned the limits of their own powers, and ascertained by reflection what objects they ought to strive for, these transcendentalists, when they *do* become practical, are the most intensely practical of men.

In our art an intelligent critic would easily point out the transcendentalists. The Prince of them all is Leonardo. I have not at hand his *Trattato della Pittura*; but in Rio's life of him there is a passage very much to our purpose which is founded on that treatise. "Pour lui, le peintre dont les connaissances ne vont pas au-delà de son ouvrage, et qui a le malheur d'être content de lui-même, est un homme qui a manqué sa vocation; au contraire, celui qui n'est jamais satisfait de son œuvre, a toutes les chances de devenir un excellent ouvrier. Il est vrai qu'il produira peu; mais tout ce qu'il produira sera admirable et attrayant." This dissatisfaction with their own work is one of the most striking characteristics of the transcendentalists. Rio speaks elsewhere of "cet incurable mécontentement de soi-même qui le tourmentait sans relâche et le forçait à

refaire ou à retoucher vingt fois la même chose." Ludovico Dolci, in his Dialogue on Painting, represents Leonardo as "a sublime genius, *always discontented with his own works.*" Again, Leonardo used to say that theory was the general, and practice the soldiers, thereby attributing a degree of importance to theory, which, though perfectly just, would never have been accorded by any merely practical person. Again, his strong, and in some respects unfortunate, tendency to extend the boundaries of his activity, was quite transcendental. He was always seeking new realms. His French biographer thus alludes to this disposition: "Cette disposition à étendre plutôt qu' à affermir ses conquêtes intellectuelles, s'était déjà manifestée chez lui dès son enfance, et ne le quitta plus pendant le cours de sa longue carrière, à laquelle manqua toujours l'unité de but, non par l'effet d'une application superficielle, mais par la *promptitude avec laquelle des horizons nouveaux s'ouvraient à son esprit.*" This continual opening of "new horizons" is the element of general progress contained in the transcendental philosophy, yet often disqualifies the individual for signal success in his especial vocation. Leonardo, indeed, aided the progress of both science and art very appreciably, as I shall show in another place. With respect to his artistic faculty, Rio says: "On peut dire que, seul entre tous les artistes, par la force, la hauteur et la souplesse de son génie, il s'éleva jusqu'à la synthèse de *l'idéalisme et du réalisme.*" He made endless preparations before beginning a serious task, "préparatifs qui avaient pour unique but de satisfaire sa conscience d'artiste." In him the transcendental period does not appear to have been limited to certain years of youth, but rather to have alternated with his practical state at irregular intervals to the very close of life. Thus, nobody could ever be sure that he would execute a commission entrusted to him, because, even when amongst his multifarious occupations, he might have found time to do it, ten to one he would just happen to be in his ideal or transcendental state, with a settled conviction that all human labor was vanity, especially his own. Hence his great bronze statue, that was

to have been, never got beyond the clay model. Italy waited ten years whilst Leonardo prepared his studies for this statue. He got it at length modelled in clay, and, instead of casting it in bronze immediately, thenceforth took no farther interest in the matter, so that the casting was delayed till Ludovico could not furnish the bronze on account of the war with France. Then the French soldiers came and amused themselves with shooting at the clay model, which they found convenient as a target; and thus this great and noble work, universally recognized by the Italians, during its brief existence, as the best of its kind in Italy, was lost for ever to the world. The portrait of Mona Lisa was four years on Leonardo's easel. Vasari says: "After loitering over it for four years, he finally left it unfinished." His Adoration of the Magi in the Uffizj is unfinished. In his Last Supper, at Milan, the head of Christ was never finished, from incapacity on the part of the artist to realize his too lofty ideal. It is related that the Prior of the monastery where Leonardo painted this work "could in no way comprehend wherefore the artist should sometimes remain half a day together absorbed in thought before his work without making any progress that he could see. This seemed to him a strange waste of time, and he would fain have had him work away as he could make the men do who were digging in his garden, never laying the pencil out of his hand." The Prior complained of Leonardo's idleness to the Duke. Leonardo condescended to explain to the Duke, "that men of genius are sometimes producing most when they seem to be laboring least, their minds being occupied in the elucidation of their ideas, and in the completion of those conceptions to which they afterwards give form and expression with the hand." And with reference to the slow progress of the equestrian statue, Vasari says: "there is good reason to believe that the very greatness of his most exalted mind, aiming at more than could be effected, was itself an impediment; perpetually seeking to add excellence to excellence and perfection to perfection." Some Servite monks, who gave a commission to Leonardo, wish-

ing him to get on with it, conceived the hospitable, but somewhat imprudent idea of lodging him and all his household, supplying the expenses of the whole. But he kept them waiting a long time, and made no beginning. "At length, however," says Vasari, "he prepared a cartoon." Piero Soderini paid Leonardo every month whilst he worked for him, but Leonardo *did not complete the work*, and so honorably offered to return the money received. "It is related," says Vasari, "that Leonardo, having received a commission for a certain picture from Pope Leo, immediately began to distil oils and herbs for the varnish, whereupon the pontiff remarked: 'Alas! the while, this man will assuredly do nothing at all, since he is thinking of the end before he has made a beginning to his work.'" There seems to have been amongst Leonardo's customers, a very general conviction that he was not to be relied upon. Vasari, in a general observation on this characteristic, gives a sufficient reason for it: "Leonardo, with his profound intelligence of art, commenced various undertakings, many of which he never completed, because it appeared to him that the hand could never give its due perfection to the object or purpose which he had in his thoughts, or beheld in his imagination." In short, he was a transcendentalist, too strongly imbued with that philosophy for sustained action, yet far from being quite paralyzed by it, or we should probably never have heard of him. His habit of seeking for discoveries, even in the most ridiculous trifles, his endless longing after the unknown, and his aspirations towards unattainable perfection, are so many signs and symptoms of transcendentalism. He tells the Duke Ludovico il Mauro that the difference between himself and the other military engineers of his day is, that their warlike instruments do not differ from those in common use, whereas he has discovered secrets. I think it much to be regretted that these tendencies should have possessed Leonardo all his life. Up to thirty, he might have learned the doctrines of this exacting and imperious philosophy; but at that age he was already great enough to have quitted her schools. What a long life he lived! and how richly

he was gifted ! and what a poor, inadequate result he has left in comparison with his astonishing powers and his length of days ! A faded fresco on a broken plaster wall, a few fair canvases, a treatise or two, and one short philosophical poem ! He made some wonderful guesses and discoveries, and achieved a colossal fame ; but so long as his immortal name shall be remembered by men, it can never be meditated on otherwise than mournfully. O splendid Leonardo ! the many-sided ; a narrower nature might have yielded more abundant fruit ! It is enough to make one hate all transcendental philosophers to think that so mighty a genius was all but lost to our art, because he would play with their most benumbing and paralyzing torpedo of a philosophy.

It is odd that the realists should be more disposed to transcendentalism than what are called the idealists ; but this seeming anomaly may be thus accounted for : The realist compares his work continually with nature, whereas the traditional idealist merely obeys certain prescribed rules. Leonardo, the most transcendental of painters, was so loyal to Nature as to assert that she alone was the mistress of superior intellects. And you will always find that the most intense realists in our art are the most exposed to the seductions of the transcendental philosophy ; for their endless striving after nature is a perpetual discouragement, and their best success seems to them but failure.

Therefore, it is likely that this philosophy has never had so many votaries in our art as now, when the victory of the realist schools of Europe may be looked upon as at last assured. Every other young painter in England is a transcendentalist. There is small hope for those who do not pass through this phase of intellectual experience.

This does not affect the truth of what I have just stated at the beginning of this chapter respecting the *general* rarity of transcendentalists. What I said was this : —

“ In all labors there are three stages — the mechanical, or imitative ; the transcendental, or reflective ; and the *intelligently* practical. I do not say, mind, that every

laborer passes through all these stages. The vast majority stop at the first; a few reach the second; still fewer attain to the third."

I spoke, you perceive, of *all* labors, not of ours alone. Now, if you take the mass of human occupations, you will find that the most part are favorable rather to the imitative than to the reflective man. In most trades reflection and discovery are superfluous, generally positively injurious to the pocket. In the manufacturing districts, where, I suppose, there is as much successful energy and ability as you will readily find anywhere, the atmosphere is by no means favorable to transcendentalism. Cotton manufacturers with an ideal turn usually ruin themselves by the premature adoption of new, and as yet imperfect inventions, and a want of steadiness in their habits of business. If Leonardo had lived in Rochdale forty years ago, he would have contributed very excellent inventions to the cotton manufacture; but he could never have profitably worked a mill. Cotton spinners who take to studious and meditative habits usually awake from their reveries to find themselves in the *Gazette*. And so in other active and busy trades. If you pause too much to reflect, you are ruined. And, after all, if you can turn out as good twist as your neighbors, at as low a figure, I see no reason why you should bother yourself about inventions, as poor Samuel Crompton did. In trade, invention may occasionally lead to fortune, but as a general rule mere industry is safer. This is so commonly understood by the more prudent tradesmen, that they rest contentedly in the traditional or imitative stage, leaving the poor geniuses to improve upon their instruments and machines.

But in our art the conditions are entirely reversed. A painter who is a realist, does not merely compare his paint with his neighbor's paint,—is not satisfied merely because he can turn out as good an article at as low a figure as the rest of his trade,—but, on the contrary, is always comparing it with appearances in Nature, which are quite other than paint, and with which all rivalry is hopeless. The bitter and discouraging lessons that this

continual comparison forces upon him, are to an intelligent young painter nothing less than an elementary course of transcendental philosophy ; and after learning a while in this terrible school, there is no telling what will become of him. His future fate, circumstances and his own degree of strength must determine. He will either lapse into inactivity and despair, in which case a speedy and total change of profession is the best thing to be hoped for him, or he will get through his transcendentalism as a child gets through its teething, having thereby gained new instruments for the acquisition of a stronger nourishment.

A great deal of the present prevalence of this philosophy is due to Mr. Ruskin and the pre-Raphaelites. Mr. Ruskin is almost as transcendental as Leonardo. And here let me observe, in passing, that although the transcendentalists are slow and unreliable as workmen, so that when they begin any thing there is no telling whether they will ever finish it, they are yet the best and most stimulating of critics. Emerson, in his Lecture on the Transcendentalists, thus describes their critical tendency. He speaks of " the extravagant demand they make on human nature. That, indeed, constitutes a new feature in their portrait, that they are the most exacting and extortionate critics. Their quarrel with every man they meet, is not with his kind, but with his degree. There is not enough of him ; that is the only fault. They prolong the privilege of childhood in this wise, of doing nothing, but making immense demands on all the gladiators in the lists of action and fame." No critic ever answered so precisely to this description as Ruskin does. The immense service he has rendered to our art has been by unceasing and importunate demanding. He has never enough of good things. He is possessed with so insatiable a hunger and thirst for all that is excellent in art, that a thousand artists toil from year to year without satisfying him. One might give a list of the things he has asked for, and got, and yet he is still asking. Let him ask ! for to demand, and exact, and stimulate to nobler and sterner aims, are his office and mission upon earth. Mr. Brett gave him chalk hills, and

he asked for the Val d'Aosta; the Val d'Aosta was accordingly mirrored for him with a marvellous fidelity, and then he wanted more of soul than the mirror gave. Once he wanted apple-blossoms, and suddenly at his word the walls of the Academy blossomed like an orchard. This drew from him the observation that the greatest men did not like flowers, so the flowers faded away from Trafalgar Square.

In Mr. Ruskin's own work, the transcendental habits of Leonardo are frequently betrayed. His long and careful collecting of materials; the extent of his range, including architecture and painting as the most prominent subjects, with politics and theology and literary criticism filling up the background, occasionally to the detriment of the matter in hand; his absolute want of method and self-direction, leading him in his best works to give us all sorts of disquisitions having nothing whatever to do with the subjects of the chapters where they occur; his constant study of Nature and ceaseless reference to her as the only authority; his contempt for tradition; and, as an artist, his exquisite refinement and delicacy of hand, to be acquired only by the severest self-criticism; all these things are so many marks and symptoms by which I know him for a transcendentalist.

And the effect Mr. Ruskin has had on our art may be generally described in this manner; namely, that he has inoculated all our younger painters with more or less of his own transcendental tendencies. All the best painters now alive in England are striving with all their might, either to paint what no one else ever painted before, or, if their subjects are old ones, to treat them more truly than they ever were treated before. Our English School is in a state of intense aspiration after hitherto unattained perfections, a state of the general mind sure to breed transcendentalists by hundreds. And so we have plenty of them of both sorts, the active and inactive.

I think as Mr. Ruskin is the best example of a critical transcendentalist I could find amongst writers on art, so Mr. Holman Hunt is the most illustrious example of a

transcendentalist in action. The whole pre-Raphaelite movement is, indeed, a result and embodiment of this philosophy. The boundless confidence of these painters in convictions which had but slight support at first beyond the limits of their own consciousness, their decisive preference of internal to external guides; their firm reliance on principles rather than persons; their courage and obstinacy in opposition; their laborious obedience to the idea which impelled them beyond the sympathies of the hour, all these things indicate a transcendental rather than a materialistic state. And Mr. Hunt himself, as slow and reflective, as thoughtful and as fastidious as Leonardo, only more concentrated, is the most perfect example of active transcendentalism in our art, and the "Christ in the Temple" its noblest result. Fortunately for England, Mr Hunt is not also by profession a military and civil engineer, so that his pictures may have a fair chance of being finished.

But strong and gifted must that painter be, who with a judgment so severe and exacting, does yet attempt to realize his conceptions in so imperfect a material as paint. To most people, when once their ideal rises to a certain height, thenceforth all execution seems vanity. How many young painters have I seen in the Slough of Despond, lost in the wild, hopeless dream of the transcendentalist, longing after impossible perfections. It is not so to the same extent in any other art, because no other human labor suggests comparisons so discouraging. A musician, for instance, may sing to an audience which is not just fresh from a chorus of angels. A poet has to contend against no superhuman rivalry. Even a sculptor enters into no hopeless contest with nature, for he does not attempt color and light, the two unattainable things, but confines himself to form alone, which is quite accurately imitable. But the painter is always in the presence of another Painter, with whom all rivalry is hopeless; and the traveller comes to his dingy canvases with eyes still dazzled by the glitter of the glacier and the splendor of the sea.

And thus in our art transcendentalism is peculiarly fatal to productiveness. Let a young painter resolve that he

will paint entire verity, — the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, — and he may as well burn palette and brushes at once. The utmost we can hope for is to be as true as the nature of our means and materials will permit, — a vast concession to falsity. But these limitations of materials are intolerable to the ardent aspirant. He sees so vividly, and feels so strongly, that he will never endure to complete any of his attempts. He feels them to be, at the best, mockeries and makeshifts. He finds it impossible to express himself in paint. He will try language, perhaps, and write poems, because the poem does not pretend to imitate, only to celebrate, the beauty of the universe. Or, if he has courage enough to stick to painting, he will push imitation to its utmost limit, like Leonardo, and Hunt, and Millais, to discover, after all, that art is less an imitation than an interpretation of nature.

VIII.

THE LAW OF PROGRESS IN ART.

THE course of artistic or other discovery appears to be very much the same as the succession of processes followed by an artist in the construction of a single picture, only that in the great field of human progress the work is accomplished by the *race*, and taken up successively at its different stages by relays of innumerable workers. The construction of a picture is usually effected very much as follows. First a rude charcoal sketch to get things in their places, and to indicate the division of the future labor. This first sketch is rude to such a degree that persons not conversant with art would not know what was meant by it, most of the curves being represented by angles and straight lines even by the best figure painters; but, however rude, it is extremely useful as a marking out of boundaries. Then comes a careful outline of the principal of these boundaries; that is, the lines enclosing the great masses. Then within these lines the dead color is roughly laid — roughly, though with consummate foresight. Then comes a second painting in detail, then a third in still minuter detail, and, with some men, even a fourth, fifth, and sixth, of detail within detail, film over film, till the work has reached the highest excellence possible to the painter.

Now, the history of human art in its great relations to the whole race is merely a repetition of this process on a vast scale, extending its minor processes through ages, and employing, not merely the fingers of one workman, but of all the best workmen in the world, generation after generation.

First the great Father of the art comes and traces out the charcoal sketch. He has time only to do this roughly

and then die. Another generation carries the work on by a more accurate division and definition of the boundaries of future labor. A third begins to fill these boundaries. A fourth goes over the whole ground again, but this time in detail. A fifth traverses it all over again, but with far minuter detail; and after this the only work for the race is this continual going over and over again the whole field of labor, traced out and partly prepared by their forefathers, but every time with more accurate discrimination in the detail.

The same order of progress is visible in maritime discovery, in the geography of the land, in the progress of agriculture, and in the advance of every science.

In maritime discovery you will find this law of progress constant from the voyage of Columbus to that of the last New York clipper. When Columbus crossed the Atlantic, the first rude sketch was made. To-day thousands of sea-captains are hard at work on the details. The credit of originating this great system of observation is due to the United States. More than a thousand of her navigators "were engaged," says Maury, "day and night, and in all parts of the ocean, in making and recording observations according to a uniform plan, and in furthering this attempt to increase our knowledge as to the winds and currents of the sea, and other phenomena that relate to its navigation and physical geography." And now all the great European nations co-operate in this plan, so that the ocean is covered with observers.

In the geography of the land we see a steady tendency towards accuracy in maps. If we take Great Britain alone as an example, we shall observe that the improvement from the earliest known maps to the Ordnance survey is not in extent of ground, but in accuracy of detail. The wonderful advance from the first rude sketch of the island to the present minute survey of every square yard of it is a perfect type of all human progress, which consists far less in the conquest of new realms — for this is only possible in the very earliest stage of progress — than in the increasing accuracy with which realms long since

conquered by our forefathers are gradually made known to us.

In the progress of agriculture we find another equally instructive example. It is always tending to a culture less and less superficial, or "skimming," as they call it in America, and more and more thorough. The progress of agriculture does not consist in the enlargement of kingdoms. The new generation occupies the old ground, but carries its culture to a more detailed perfection.

In the advance of other sciences the same course is followed. First comes a man of large grasp, who lays down the rough charcoal outline of the new science; then two or three take it up and define his outline better, correcting it where faultiest. Some time afterwards you will find ten thousand laborers filling up the minutest details of the discovery. The history of photography from the days of Niepce to the present time is the most striking illustration I remember. The original problem has scarcely been enlarged, but how minutely has it been worked out! Human anatomy and physiology have followed the same law. The first problem was *Man*, and the problem of to-day is still *Man*; but within this narrow envelope, our skin, how much has been explored and learned, how much yet remains for future investigation!

In the history of our art of Landscape Painting, Turner, our Columbus, did not supersede, but prepare our work. We are, in relation to him, as observant sea-captains to a great maritime discoverer. We go over the same waters, and we add the results of all our lives of observation to his great hints and strivings after truth. In the broad facts he saw and proved, our evidence confirms his, but we have still much to explore in which his charts cannot help us.

What is known as the pre-Raphaelite movement in painting resembles the system of maritime observations instituted by the United States. The sea had been traversed before by innumerable navigators, but the time had at last arrived when a more accurate and perfect knowledge of it was felt to be desirable. It was all to be ex-

amined over again, therefore, on a system infinitely more exacting and more severe than had ever been applied to it before. So in art, though Titian had painted figures and Turner landscapes, it was felt by our younger painters that the time was ripe for a new investigation of Nature's *aspects*, both in man and the earth; but this new investigation must be conducted with a resolute adherence to truth, and an accurate recording (in colors) of artistic observations. So we are going over the whole ground again like the modern sea-captains with their charts and note-books. And it is probable that we shall surpass our predecessors in accuracy, because this is a quality which increases with the progress of science. But as to our surpassing them in creative genius, that is quite another matter, depending entirely on individual capacity. For the painter is a compound of poet and man of science, and it does not follow that the poetic half of him will develop itself with the same rapidity as the scientific half. The probability seems even to lie a little the other way; it is difficult to conceive any order of quite accurate landscape as purely poetical as the fairest Turnerian dreams.

I thus associate artistic progress with scientific, because the art of painting is strictly a compound of two sciences, with a poetic infusion from the mind of the artist. The sciences are, first, the great science of natural aspects, an infinite ocean of discovery which ten thousand discoverers might traverse for ever without exhausting; and, secondly, the technical science of color. These sciences follow precisely the same law of progress as all other sciences, though the element of human feeling may remain much the same in different generations of men. Painting, however, develops itself very unequally, because one of its component sciences may be quite stationary, whilst another is in rapid progress. Thus in the Renaissance schools, generally, the science of the human figure progressed with astonishing vigor, whilst the science of landscape gained little ground. The science of color, more limited and technical than that of natural aspects, reached an early and splendid maturity in Titian; nevertheless we moderns

have added to it several valuable processes, unknown to Titian, yet absolutely necessary for the accurate rendering of many truths we desire to express, which did not come within the range of Titian's art. In all this, painting is exactly on the same footing with other sciences; the highest element in it, the *soul* of its master-works, being always, in every age, a matter of individual genius. The progressive element in our art is the scientific element, not the poetic; but it must not be forgotten that the scientific portion of any work of pictorial art is a very large portion of it — is, in short, the whole body of it; that the feeling of the artist infuses the spiritual element only, and has nothing to do with matters of scientific fact.

We are neither to underrate nor to exaggerate the importance of the science of natural aspects, but we are to understand that, like all other sciences, it is essentially progressive, and we are to accept its progress as a matter of course. Artists will not be any the more famous for being scientific, but they are compelled to become scientific, because they have embraced a profession which includes a natural science, just as the profession of medicine does. What I desire to enforce is the great truth that *within* the Art of Painting there exists, flourishes, and advances, a noble and glorious SCIENCE — a science as great as geology, or astronomy, or chemistry — a science, like them, based entirely on nature, and which is essentially and irresistibly progressive.

Whether, in its mighty progress, this great science will forward the poetic part of the art, I know not; but it will undoubtedly furnish continually new subjects for noble thought, and new excitement to the enthusiasm of the student. Without this stimulus of progress, the art would become conventionalized and sink into a manufacture, as it always has done when religious authority or national customs have arrested its scientific advance. I, therefore, believe that the very greatest of all dangers to our art, if not the only danger to it, is the stoppage of its scientific development: in other words, its abandonment of the pursuit of truth. So long as all Nature is open to art, there

surely cannot lack the necessary excitement for the poetic temperament in the artist.

And as I perceive now around me all the signs of intense scientific activity in contemporary artists ; as they ransack all the realms of Nature for new facts, and are incessantly recording on canvas truths which were never before recorded for the human race, I feel unlimited hope and confidence in the future. The apprehensions of the approaching extinction of the art of painting, expressed by Constable and others, appear to me just as reasonable and well-founded as apprehensions of the approaching extinction of the science of geography.

IX.

ANALYSIS AND SYNTHESIS IN PAINTING.

WHEN Mrs. Beecher Stowe visited England, she found, to her great perplexity, that artists and critics could no more agree about art than mankind generally can about religion. To a thoughtful and sincere woman, anxious to find out what she ought to believe about every thing in which she felt an interest, the discovery of the diversity in art doctrine which exists in Europe must have been quite painful. This diversity is a fact full of difficulty and discouragement to students, whose only wish is to learn to think rightly, and whose degree of culture in the matter of art is not yet sufficient to give them an independent standing-point of their own. You pay a visit, let us suppose, to some eminent artist, and if your degree of acquaintance permits it, or you appear to desire it, he will probably, out of pure kindness to you, be led into a sort of talk more or less positive and didactic, and will enunciate some strong opinions, and lay down some hard dogmas, of the truth of which a long experience has convinced him. You go away, congratulating yourself on having acquired so much wisdom, and if you never talk with any other painter (or critic), you *may*, perhaps, rest satisfied with what you have heard. But if you know another eminent painter, the chances are that he will utter another set of doctrines; and if you know half a dozen, you will hear so many opposite opinions, that one of two results will be produced in you: either hopeless, helpless, life-long bewilderment, or a quiet resolve to labor to acquire independent opinions of your own.

Is the truth, then, nowhere? Nay, rather, it is everywhere. For as animal life is a balanced warfare of op-

posite forces, so the life of art is a fine balance, resulting from the perpetual contention of warring truths. And each of these truths has its living enunciator, some painter or critic who insists upon it without ceasing; so that every truth gets uttered ultimately with all those advantages of vigorous statement which the hot ardor of partisanship can alone achieve. After all, it is but a difference of emphasis here and emphasis there. A man will always emphasize those truths about art which most strongly recommend themselves to his own peculiar personal temperament. This comes from the vastness of art, and the variety of human organizations. For art is so immense a study, that no one man ever knew the whole truth about it. Art is a world of which each student sees and knows some fragment, just as our globe is known in little bits to different members of the human race, each farm being known to its own farmer, each house to its own inhabitant, but no one man knowing all the farms and all the houses on the globe. And the opinions of artists and critics can only be profitable to us if we consider their own point of view, where they are on the great art sphere, and what they can or cannot see from thence. And it is also necessary to take into account their personal organization, of which, for this time, we have only space to consider two broad characteristics. Some men see synthetically, others analytically.

1. *The analytic habit of mind.*—If the reader has amongst his friends men of much intellectual culture, he will probably have met with an analyst. They are wonderfully keen investigators, and cunning hunters-up of particular facts, in the pursuit of which they pay no attention to other facts. They do not fish with a net, nor even with a trident, but with one thin sharp spear. It is perhaps on this account that analytic people often seem to us at once so intelligent and so obtuse. When sufficiently excited to investigate a fact they penetrate it very soon, but without that excitement every fact escapes them. The pure analyst is like a man always looking through a microscope: what he *does* see he sees with supernatural

clearness, but that one point is very small in comparison to all that is going on around him.

2. *The synthetic habit of mind.* — Synthesists find continual pleasure in observing the *relations* of things, but from their largeness of range they constantly miss minute truths, nor do they ever see any thing so vividly as the analysts see that which they have analyzed. Whenever they have to sacrifice either a truth of relation or a truth of detail, they always sacrifice the detail. The synthetic breadth of view seems to analysts to want accuracy, and to be something very like a general bluntness. The synthesist, on the other hand, considers analysts to be clever children, surprisingly sharp on some points, and ignorant of every thing else. The analyst esteems his own quality, penetration; the synthesist also esteems his own quality, which is the power of seeing many things at once, with all their mutual influences.

3. *The combination of the two minds in one.* — It sometimes happens that a synthesist is gifted with considerable powers of analysis, or the converse. When the two powers coexist in great vigor the result is, in painting, that union of breadth with detail which is so precious and so rare. An artist endowed with the double gift analyzes all the pictorial impressions he receives by resolving them into their minutest particles, but at the same time he sees all these particles in their just relations, which the mere analyst does not. The best intellect for painting is one habitually synthetic, yet capable of the most accurate analysis by an effort of the will. When the analytic tendency predominates, even though there be considerable power of synthesis, the work is not so good, because good *wholes*, with defective parts, are always more valuable than bad wholes even though their parts be separately excellent.

4. *Primary artistic analysis of natural appearances.* — A finished picture is an attempt to render nature as nearly as possible in full, but many kinds of drawing purposely leave out whole classes of truths, and this, in itself, is a sort of rude primary analysis. Every natural picture,

whether of landscape or figures, has at least the following elements :—

Shapes of objects, or spaces occupied by them on the field of vision.

Their local color.

Reflected color.

Light and dark produced by local color.

Light and dark produced by illumination.

If we reject color we still have the various other truths represented in a good engraving; but we may go much farther in rejection, and still remain intelligible. We may reject the light and dark produced by local color, as the old masters often did in their studies, and as is done constantly, either absolutely or partially, in most of our popular wood-cuts. We may reject even the light and dark produced by illumination, and merely represent our objects by outlines, giving the boundaries of their shapes. The way in which men have always been accustomed to take and leave the truths of nature* proves a certain power of analysis, without which it would hardly have occurred to any one to translate colored objects into white and black, and still less to represent them by mere outlines, which are only artificial inclosures of spaces, like fences round fields.

5. *Artistic analysis of light.* — Light presents itself to the simple and unscientific, but very observant, artistic mind in two different characters, as direct or reflected light. What are called shadows, being merely parts of the subject not directly illuminated, are lighted by complex reflected lights. In the study of direct light the artistic analyst is so far an optician as to perceive that surfaces at right angles to the direct rays are most strongly illuminated, and that as the angle becomes more acute the degree of illumination diminishes; this fact, at least he perceives, because it is the first secret of successful modelling. But

* And that for thousands of years. The Nineveh marbles give evidence of great power of analysis, and so does much Egyptian work. Their strong abstraction must have been based upon some kind of analysis.



it is in the study of reflected lights that artistic analysis is most actively exercised. They come from sources often so unexpected that a definite mental effort is needed to trace them all to their various origins, and as reflections are almost always complex, the sort of effort they most frequently call for is analysis. Again, as light is endlessly reverberating, we have re-reflections and re-re-reflections, which, mingling together, produce appearances that all artists try to account for, and that never *can* be accounted for without the most subtle and delicate analysis.

6. *Artistic analysis of forms.* — The study of anatomy is the most definitely analytic movement in this direction in figure painting. Actual dissection is evidently analytic, but so also is mere observation, when it seeks the separate causes of attitudes and expressions in living creatures, for these cannot be clearly defined without reference to the facts of anatomy. The best analyst of expression would be an anatomist accustomed to observe living faces under all the varieties of human emotion, with continual reference to anatomy. Sir Charles Bell was such an observer, and his treatise on the Anatomy of Expression is an interesting example of the analysis of art and nature in connection with each other. In landscape we have an increasing tendency to analysis, as shown by the special study of plants, even to dissection of flowers, and the careful analysis of mountain form with reference to geological structure. Mountains cannot be actually dissected, but by means of geological diagrams we arrive at the results of dissection. This kind of study has however the peculiarity that it teaches the *actual* forms, not the apparent ones, and therefore, though valuable to a certain extent for the definite information it conveys, would be of no use in drawing and painting unless carried on in conjunction with that other kind of form-analysis which deals with the appearances of forms, that is, the shapes of the spaces which they occupy on the plane of vision, and their projection.

The science of perspective, though of little practical utility in painting, was a resolute attempt to analyze the

appearances of forms in a rigidly scientific manner. A more profitable kind of analysis is that constantly exercised by the eye of every good draughtsman when he looks energetically at a cluster of forms and decomposes them, just before drawing them. In such moments of hard looking a good figure painter resolves a model into hundreds of variously swelling muscles with many projections of bony structure, every one of which, though never so faintly marked, he sees and seizes in its own place. But I cannot help thinking (this may be because I try to paint landscape myself, and so feel the difficulty of it) that the most marvellous efforts in this kind of analysis are made by the best of our modern English landscape painters. The way in which they distinguish the thousands of quite different objects, every one of which has to be separately examined and studied before a modern detailed landscape can possibly be painted, is, I believe, the uttermost reach of analysis which can be pointed to in the history of art. For, first, there is the analysis of the species of objects, as all the endless species of trees, plants, rocks, &c., and then the disentangling of the innumerable crowds of them which cover natural scenery in infinite confusion. When you have analyzed the human body thoroughly you are master of figure analysis, but when you have analyzed an oak-tree thoroughly you are *not* master of landscape analysis; there still remain ever so many other species of trees, and then the mountains, and the rocks, and the infinite foreground vegetation, and the forms of water as it runs in torrents and rises in storm-waves, and the forms of clouds,—fields vast enough, each of them, for the labor of a life!

7. *Artistic analysis of color.*—In looking at any natural picture, whether a group of men or animals, or a landscape, we are aware of certain broad masses of color, but also, in exact proportion to our culture, we perceive variety *within* the masses. For example, the popular mind of the Burgundy wine district has long perceived the splendid golden color of the vines in autumn, so that the French department in which those vineyards are situated has for its title

that noble one the *Côte d'Or*, a name peculiarly interesting as a national recognition of the glory of natural color. Every traveller, not color-blind, who in the month of October drives along the broad road that runs past the *Clos de Vougeot* through *Nuits* to *Beaune*, sees on his right hand such a perpetual blaze of golden color over the vast expanse of sloping vineyards, that the least observant cannot help talking about it and wondering at it. But I doubt whether anybody who has not tried to paint knows of how many elements that color is composed: what subtle, delicate grays there are in it, what strange purples, what tender, exquisite greens, what spots of sanguine crimson, what grave and sober sorts of russet, what paleness of fading yellow, nearer the color of primroses than of gold. The impression given by the union of all these colors is invariably that of deep, reddish, very rich gold; but pray how can a painter paint so composite a color without first decomposing it? On finding himself in front of such a burning expanse of vine-leaves, of whose countless millions not two are colored precisely alike, a painter's first thought is to sift out and analyze the elements of his own impression in order that he may himself afterwards, by the re-union of the same elements, reproduce the impression on the minds of others. For the public mind is, on this question, more critical than its habitual simplicity of language would lead us to suppose. A gentleman who has been driving through the wine district in autumn uses such simple, emphatic words to describe his impressions that you would imagine a little pure cadmium yellow might satisfy him, and that the grays and purples were superfluous. Not so. He would at once feel that the cadmium was crude (though no cruder than his own word "golden"), and to satisfy him you would have to paint the grays and purples, to accomplish which you must first analyze them.

It is probable that spectators who only look at pictures, and are not accustomed to the conversation of artists, may not give them credit for much of this sort of analysis, but the portfolios of many landscape painters contain sketches

and memoranda on which letters, or words, and sometimes whole sentences are written, from which it would be easy to prove that their authors really *do* analyze color before painting it. The following paragraph, copied just as it stands from a note written upon a study of my own, may be taken as a specimen of such memoranda. It was scribbled hastily for my own guidance, and may be accepted for what it is worth, though I would much rather quote from the private memoranda of some other and better painter if I had the opportunity. The numbers refer to corresponding numbers on the study.

“The causes of the varieties of color in these mountains are as follows: First, there is the rocky structure of the mountain itself, which comes out bare in the bosses, as, for instance, continually in Ben Vorich (No. 1), which is the best example of ruggedness at Loch Awe. This bare rock gives a valuable cool gray tint, but grass grows where the soil holds, and this grass, as the ground is poor, reaches no more brilliant color than a warm olive green. The most precious result of this conformation is that wherever water runs in wet weather *the grass is much greener*, and this produces the appearance of an infinite number of winding lines of green, running in and out amongst the rocks in the most wayward manner, but in reality always subject to the laws by which water flows. And it is these green stream-marks which indicate, more than any thing else except *shadow*, the true mountain form. Although visibly enough defined, they are always gradated at their edges into the olive-green around, because the water does not always flow down them in the same quantity, and only occasional floods refresh the edges, whereas every shower nourishes the roots in the middle, which therefore produce the greenest grass. The trees at present (May) are of a dark olive green, but the places where the wood has been cut are reddish. In No 2 there is little variety of color just now, the principal elements of it being the usual olive grass and the rock structure under it. The exposed ground to the right on this mountain is redder, though still very gray. No. 3 has a very

slender covering of grass, slashed all over with reddish openings. In No. 4, just under the figure, or a little to the right of it, the openings are redder than anywhere else. In No. 5 the bare rock scarcely appears at all, but there is a great intricacy of mosaic on account of the grass being patched with heather. In No. 6 the bare rock is *nowhere* visible, but there is the richest mosaic of grass and heather. As to the middle distance, beginning with the promontory, some trees are now in their richest spring green, whilst the evergreens show dark amongst them, and therefore produce a telling contrast. The rest of the middle distance is a mosaic of purple and green, neither intense now." But all this, I fear, is becoming tiresome, and so let us get to the concluding sentence, which certainly seems to have been written by somebody who was trying very hard to analyze (or separate the elements of) the natural subject, and found himself baffled by nature's inextricable entanglement. "*Objects come against each other continually where there is not contrast enough, either of color or light, to separate them, and the consequence is an inextricable confusion; this is especially noticeable in the leafless tree to the right, which is quite confused with the leafy one and the mountain background.*"

Here is only the very rudest analysis. Grass is greener in one place than in another because it is better watered, hills are slashed with reddish openings in the grassy turf, or covered with a rich mosaic of purple and green. There is another kind of color analysis incomparably more delicate: that of a colorist actually working in color, for then, at every instant, he is analyzing hues which no words can describe, no writing decompose. A colorist *must* be an analyst of color — how far consciously so or not it may be difficult to determine, some colorists thinking and looking laboriously before they paint, others working (as it would seem) by happy instinct. But out of analysis, in every case, comes the astounding sorcery of making things look quite right by means that seem so arbitrary, and odd, and wrong. If you go to any great work in color, and stare hard into it, at a distance of six inches, you will see queer

dots and streaks of color quite unlike what lies on that part of the natural subject, but which tell truly at the right distance, because they are *concentrations of color elements gathered by the analysis of surrounding fields of color*. They are true essences, obtained by analysis.*

8. *Critical analysis of compositions.* — Art-critics sometimes analyze pictorial compositions with a view to ascertain the laws of composition. True composers, I imagine, rarely, if ever, analyze their own work in this way, and the main use of such analysis is that it makes us admire good compositions more and enjoy them better. The sort of analysis with which critics often amuse themselves may be best understood by an example; and in order to be quite sure that the composition selected for examination is accessible to all readers of this Review, I will choose the drawing by Nicholas Poussin, a photograph of which was given in the second number.

It is a building of many forms, apparently acting in perfect freedom, into one structure of a character so peculiarly artificial that composition of this perfect kind is never found in any natural group. Nature gives abundant hints and suggestions, but never quite composes, in our human sense; just as the murmurs of waves and the whistling of the wind may suggest musical ideas, but never play tunes. In this drawing the structural arrangement of the group is obvious at a glance. The centre is the head of Pan's image. A canopy is formed over it, not only by the trees, but by an imaginary arch begun at one side by the arm and trumpet of a faun, and at the other by the arm and timbrel of a nymph. See how

* There is a curious resemblance between the faculty of analysis in seeing color and in tasting food. Many of us can know that a dish is badly cooked without being able to say why. Any practised analyst of flavors, a good cook, or an epicure, can somehow separate the most composite flavor into all its elements, and so finds out at once which element is superabundant and which deficient. The faculty of musical analysis is of the same kind. A good musical critic not only hears the *whole* of a chorus, but he hears all the parts separately, as well as simultaneously. And it seems probable that a composer, when writing an opera, hears in his imagination combinations of sound, which he has to analyze before making out his score.

curiously the right arm of the faun continues the curve of the arch, and as the hand did not go far enough down it holds a piece of drapery which carries the line almost to the thigh of the kneeling faun, which really bears, on that side, the weight of the arch. On the right the arch is continued by three flying pieces of drapery, and the body and leg of the boy, his foot in the right-hand corner being the termination of the arch on that side. Under this imaginary arch is another easily traceable, one of which the head of Pan's image is the keystone. This second or inner arch is constructed on the right of the outspread arms and head of the nymph taking the flowers, the head of the child who carries the flower-basket, and the head, body, and left leg of the boy who is helping the drinking satyr. On the left, the same arch runs from the right knee of the kneeling faun through his body and head to the head of the woman on the goat, then through the faun's head at her side to the left hand of the nymph carrying the faun, whence the ascent to Pan's head is very slight. The reader will observe how curiously all the other forms support this arch, or correspond to it. The arm of the kneeling faun, the woman's outstretched arm, the arm of the faun at her side, are built together compactly. And observe that the faun on the nymph's shoulder keeps its right hind-leg lower for the same reason. To complete the composition, there are *festoons* of forms *under* Pan as well as arches above him. The most important festoon begins on the left with the inclined body and the extended right leg of the nymph on the goat. It reaches the ground in the thigh of the fallen satyr, and rises again through his shoulder to the body of the stooping faun. See how the three heads of the stooping faun, the drunken satyr, and the boy, carry the festoon up regularly on the right. There is also a smaller festoon nearer Pan descending from the uplifted hand of the nymph who carries the faun, through her right hand, and along the faun's head, to the shoulder of the nymph who has pushed down the satyr, thence it rises through her head to the drapery of the nymph taking flowers, and through *her* head to the timbrel.

A lower festoon is completed by the flower-basket thrown down in the foreground, to which the foot of the riding nymph points, and the trees in the background are strengthening pillars within the larger or imaginary arch. The composition may be summarily described as a central image of Pan surrounded by arches and festoons of combined forms. It is a real *structure*, not a fortuitous agglomeration. Much more might be said of it in this way, for the smallest details quite curiously corroborate what has been already advanced, but this analysis is long enough to be read with patience.

9. *Artistic analysis in technical methods.*—Painters with a strong analytic tendency often try to separate the work of painting as much as possible, because such intellects find difficulties conquerable in succession which, to them, are insuperable when united. The excessive technical difficulty of painting consists in this, that with one and the same touch the artist has to give true form and true color—it is like a game at billiards where you have to hit two balls with one stroke, with the difference that in painting misses are injurious to the beauty of the work and are hard to retrieve. The finest execution is therefore always marked by great power of synthesis, of which more presently; but it is safer for artists who are not endowed with that power to divide the difficulties as if they were hostile armies, and attack them separately. Such painters often work in a sort of mosaic on a carefully prepared design; and as working with mixed tints is a kind of synthesis, they sometimes carry the analytic principle so far as to resolve the tints into their components, and paint with small touches of quite pure color. The practical analysis of natural tints has never, I believe, been carried farther than by Whaite and Alfred Hunt, who succeed in rendering them with remarkable brilliance on the principle of resolving compound tints and representing them by the juxtaposition, or superposition, of the component colors. It is right to add that conquering difficulties by dividing them was not the only object of these artists. They perceived that the brilliance of pig-

ments was always dulled by mixture, and that the too common modern practice of unlimited intermixture led to ruinous results. To avoid this they adopted the plan of working in pure colors on a white ground, and, as they liked form, they chose to work on a careful design. But the analytic tendency in execution is by no means confined to these artists and their school. We observe it in much modern English work. Holman Hunt's practice is analytic, indeed the pre-Raphaelite way of work is naturally analytic, because pre-Raphaelitism has, from the beginning, been an analytic movement, and may be best defined as a new analysis of nature. When pictures are painted on careful designs and finished part by part, it is analytic execution. When they are first blocked out roughly in formless masses and brought forward all at once into drawing and detail, it is synthetic execution. Of course in the first instance there must coexist considerable intellectual power of synthesis, and, in the second, of analysis, but as regards execution the distinction is real.

Pictures painted analytically are objects of much contempt to critics who admire exclusively the opposite principle of work. They deny to such art the title of "painting" altogether, and call it "colored drawing." Having no prejudice against either process I may be trusted, so far, in speaking of their relative merits and defects. Analytic work is generally more carefully drawn and more pure and bright in color; synthetic work is generally truer in effect, freer in handling, and more masterly in impasto. Whaite is an excellent example of the former, and Lambinet of the latter.

10. *Analytic systems of art study.*—The principle of analysis may be carried very far in art education. The pupil may have the difficulties so ingeniously divided for him as rarely to present more than one at a time for him to contend against. The good of this system is that by separating the difficulties they are more thoroughly understood and more easily conquered; the evil of it, that it in no way represents the struggles of the mature career of

an artist whose supreme embarrassment is *not* the number of difficulties, but the fact of their intimate interunion. The pupil who has always been breaking the sticks one by one is likely to experience severe disappointment when he discovers that he cannot break the faggot.

Advocates for the analytic system of art education generally attach such importance to drawing, that they would have painting postponed until the pupil has acquired the power of accurate design. The following sketch of an analytic system of education in landscape will show how far the principle may be carried. As to the policy of adopting any such system in practice, it would be wise to do so only on condition of frequently laying it aside for a completely synthetic way of work. For example, a pupil who should work alternately six months with a severe analyst and six with a synthesist would escape the dangers peculiar to each method when followed exclusively.

1. Study of simple objects in black and white with the pen, like Durer's wood-cuts, not recognizing local color, and only using shading to help the expression of form. Common daylight permitted but no sunshine. Great attention directed to firmness and accuracy of line.

2. Study in black and white, aiming chiefly at the translation of local color. No sunshine admitted. Form not so severely required as before.

3. Studies of the same objects in sunshine. In the attempt to render *light*, form and local color not severely required from the student. This of course involves the careful study of cast shadows and reflected lights.

4. Analytic study of many classes of natural objects by the foregoing methods. Leaves, flowers, grasses, mosses, branches, twigs, trunks, stones, rocks (especially such portions of them as best show their structure), parts of mountains, bits of foreground, and so on. All the principal species of trees, rocks, &c., to be studied separately.

5. Studies admitting color but no sunshine. These studies being entirely for local color every thing else is, for the time, treated as of minor importance. Repetitions of

the analytic study of natural objects, this time with their local color, and *for* it peculiarly.*

6. Studies for colored sunshine. New analysis of natural objects in sunshine. Truth of sunlight and sun-color all that is aimed at.

11. *Partial or irregular analysis.* — It is only in very recent times that the doctrine that every thing is worthy of study has been admitted by artists, and even yet we find figure painters who will not take the trouble to analyze landscape seriously and therefore cannot paint it at all. Ingres is a notable example of partial analysis; he has analyzed the human figure, and can draw it well, but he cannot draw a stick or a stone, far less a wave of the sea or the ripple of a brook. But if the reader cares to seek for examples of partial analysis he will find them abundantly in the Exhibitions. The best painting requires an insight so universal that nothing can escape it, and as this sort of insight is rare, we find that one painter analyzes one thing, and another another, but that nearly all of them miss some orders of truths. Partial analysis is indeed only another name for imperfect information, which cannot be hidden in painting, as it may in literature, by artfully passing one's ignorances in a parenthesis and loudly enlarging upon the little we know. The empty space in the painter's brain is represented by a corresponding emptiness in his pictures, and the critic will often find evidences of partial or irregular analysis.

The difference in *general* power of analysis between one man and another is also very great. A common painter contemplating nature is like a rustic staring at the stars; he can analyze the more obvious constellations, but behind them lie dim fields of cloudy light which he cannot resolve; and the greatest painters are like astronomers with telescopes, analyzing much, and guessing at more, yet still always ultimately finding the last infinite and impenetrable mystery of things.

* The best time for such study as this is in gloomy weather, after, or during rain. The local colors are then at their fullest, and still imitable.

12. *Pernicious excess in analysis.* — When painters see detail very clearly, they are often fatally led into morbid or excessive analysis. In this state the artist perceives detail with surprising minuteness, and is, as it were, fascinated and blinded by it, than which nothing can be more dangerous to any painter, for then he cannot see one natural picture, nor even a part of it, but only the particles of parts.

We see the same tendency at work in other things. Grammar is an analysis of language, and may be of some use in its way, provided we do not weary ourselves with it. But excessive grammar is over analysis, and grammarians are often rendered insensible to the artistic beauty of great literary works by their petty grammatical habits. They will interrupt you in the finest passages to expatiate on the force of a particle. As there are two ways of reading Homer, that of the poet and that of the philologist, so also there are two ways of reading nature, — the artist's and the analyst's.

13. *Premature synthesis;* — Synthesis, which is attempted before a sufficient power of analysis has been acquired and exercised. The color work of amateurs, who are so situated as to be able to devote little time to the practice of art, is nearly always rendered nugatory by premature synthesis. So also, very frequently, is that of artists by profession who are obliged to expose pictures for sale without having given sufficient time to analysis in the way of study.

14. *Synthesis in light.* — The lightness and darkness of each object, being relative, must be translated synthetically, that is, with continual reference to the rest of the picture. When this is not done, the parts may be separately true, yet false when considered with reference to the whole. The necessity for synthetic *and artificial* systems of light in pictorial art results from the difference in scale of natural and pictorial light, for, if they were the same, a part truly copied in its light and dark would also be true relatively to the whole, which it cannot be so long as our scale is shorter than Nature's.

There is also, in all good pictorial art, a synthetic and artificial *arrangement* of light. It very seldom occurs that a natural scene is illuminated in a way precisely fitted to the purposes of art, because the first want of human art is *unity*, and Nature, in those fragments of her creation which we make into artistic wholes, seldom cares to achieve unity. *The real unities of Nature are so large as to be beyond the grasp of painting.* Her landscapes are fragments, but the globe is a rounded whole; her men and women are imperfect details, but the human race is a balanced being. Art takes tiny fragments of Nature's great wholes and makes little wholes of them. Nature's illumination is generally scattered — wants concentration. Good artists contrive, without violating the laws of possible phenomena, to light their pictures in such a manner that the light, instead of shattering the composition into fragments, shall bind and bring together all its chiefest elements.

15. *Synthesis in color.* — Color requires higher power of synthesis than any thing else in art, for although analysis is of use in studying natural color, it does not of itself enable us to make color of our own; because, whether you will or not, in painting on any one part of your picture you are really painting upon, that is, changing the color of, the whole canvas at once, and unless you do this always synthetically you will never succeed. Every new touch changes all the touches already laid, — if warmer it cools them, if cooler it warms them, if brighter it dulls them, if duller it lends them brightness. This is so curiously true that visitors to the studios of painters constantly believe that the artist has been working on portions of his picture which he has never touched since their previous visits. And they are right.

16. *Synthesis in form.* — Commonly called composition. The synthetic arrangement of forms is strikingly apparent in all first-rate design, and it is one of the eternal distinctions which separate good design from photography. In photography the arrangement of forms can *never* be synthetic. You may group your models and materials as

artfully as you like, there will be no synthesis. So in living groups of costumed models, called *tableaux vivants*, which people sometimes amuse themselves by getting up, it is not possible, by any amount of care in arrangement, ever to obtain artistic synthesis. Why?

Because synthesis in form does not merely *arrange* given forms, but runs into, and modifies, every line in the forms themselves. A great inventive artist never in a picture draws any thing exactly as it is, but compels it into such shapes as he wants in that place, having reference all the time to all the other shapes either already put, or to be put, in all the other parts of the picture. Hence the imitation of artistic composition by grouping things for the photographer, or by *tableaux vivants*, is a manifest absurdity.

Something of the mutual effect of colors is observable in the relations of forms. They modify each other to a considerable extent by contrast; a stiff line seems doubly stiff beside a flowing one, and a slight curve is much more perceptible when you set it beside a straight line. Good composers avail themselves of this property with great skill, and their lightest grace and sturdiest strength are due to it.

17. *Synthetic systems of art study.* — A difference of opinion exists amongst painters as to whether young artists ought to begin to paint before they have mastered drawing, or only take up the palette when already accomplished draughtsmen. This difference may be stated as, on the one hand, an advocacy of the analytic system of art education, and, on the other, of the synthetic. Sir Joshua Reynolds and Mr. Leslie are amongst the synthetists; and I know a good painter, who, on finding that a young friend of his was drawing assiduously to improve his forms, recommended him most urgently not to draw in black and white, but rather try to improve his drawing gradually *whilst painting*; in other words, to study synthetically.

There is much truth in this view, and much importance is to be attached to the fact that since painting is, after all,

work emphatically synthetic (being the union of many forms and colors and lights and darks into artistic wholes), it must be right to get the student as early as possible into the *habit* of synthesis. But painting is a synthesis of what? Of innumerable truths. And it is found, in practice, that the human faculties are not large enough to learn all these truths at once.

The most rational conclusion appears to be that the right principle of early study is analysis; but that between the period of studentship and that of mastery there exists an interval, in many cases long and laborious, when the artist is painfully acquiring the power of synthesis, that is, the power of expressing all at once, and harmoniously, the many different facts which he is already able to express separately.

Such are a few of the reflections which naturally suggest themselves, in one shape or other, to every painter who thinks about his art. But it is seldom that painters are willing to recognize the full value of *both* the two great mental operations which govern the art of painting. Some urge the necessity of analysis: the separation of aim in study, the resolution of all things into their component parts, and the conscious investigation of causes. Others, and these generally the greater men, say that all analysis is valueless except as a part, and by no means the most difficult part, of study, that for performance it goes a very little way; and these latter have such slight respect for the power of analysis, that they neither value it much in themselves nor honor it in their fellow-artists. They assert, too, that a strong healthy eye, which sees things truly as they appear, and a retentive memory, which holds what the eye has seen, are better possessions for a painter than the power of minute analysis. And they are certainly right so far, that analysis becomes a habit, and always has a tendency to attach itself to some facts to the neglect of others, so that a skilled analyst sees a few things with supernatural clearness and is blind to everything which he has not analyzed. On the other hand, a true synthesist sees quite *impartially*, and this impartiality

makes him largely receptive. The analyst penetrates and resolves many things, but a perfect synthesist would receive all things.

The best state for a painter would, no doubt, be to see things all at once, in their right pictorial relations, and then to be able to keep the natural group or scene in his memory with perfect distinctness, and *look* at it, as one looks at a real scene, but without any effort of analysis, simply seeing and copying the complete picture in the mind. Painters are generally strong as they approach to this state, and weak as they recede from it; the weakest state of all being when the artist finds himself compelled to think about what he is doing, and to analyze nature with full consciousness of his occupation. Nevertheless, simplicity of sight and strength of memory are so rare, that most painters are wise in making up for the deficiency of these, so far as they are able, by scientific accuracy of analysis and laborious gathering of registered observations. Yet, though it may be permitted to accumulate materials by such processes of separation, we may rest assured of this, that in all fine art, the supreme Lord of Construction, who, if present, makes precious the most meagre materials, and in whose absence all that knowledge can contribute and wealth procure will be lavished vainly, is that strong ruler Synthesis, whom Analysis may effectually serve, but can never either replace or represent.

X.

THE REACTION FROM PRE-RAPHAELITISM.

THE paper on Analysis and Synthesis in Painting was written to clear the way for this. Having considered the great theoretical question at length, we can now dispose of this practical one briefly.

The Pre-Raphaelite movement is understood to have combined two very distinct aims: first, the intellectual elevation of art by the choice of noble and original subjects, and, secondly, its technical advancement by a new and minute analysis of nature. The movement was therefore at the same time very ambitious intellectually, and very arduous practically, requiring both considerable mental power for conception and enormous labor of hand for realization. In two words, the Pre-Raphaelites were intellectual and analytic, both to a superlative degree, previous art, in England at least, having generally been unintellectual (much of it even *bête*), and either nobly synthetic (Reynolds, Gainsborough, Turner), or feebly attempting synthesis (West, Haydon, &c.), or again partially analytic (Wilkie, Landseer), but never yet resolutely and thoroughly analytic.

The Pre-Raphaelite movement in painting was contemporary with similar tendencies in the outer public mind. We are generally more intellectual than men of the last generation, because more familiar with literature, and consequently with many forms of thought which find full expression in literature, yet have no sufficient room for development in the fragmentary patchwork of common conversation. The steady increase of scientific studies has also given very many of us the habit of analysis. The father and mother of modern Pre-Raphaelitism were

modern literary thought and modern scientific investigation of the facts of nature.

The reader is familiar with the chief products of the movement. He has a general idea of what constitutes a Pre-Raphaelite picture. But if he endeavors to construct a definition of a Pre-Raphaelite picture, he will find it exceedingly difficult; I venture to add that he will not be able to construct such a definition at all without including some of the *defects* of Pre-Raphaelitism; and I argue that as in course of time, by a reaction natural to men of high artistic endowments, the Pre-Raphaelite leaders will probably get rid of these defects, they will then produce works which, however excellent, will no longer be recognizable as Pre-Raphaelite works, or distinguishable by the more obvious marks of the sect.

The marks of the sect were intellectual and emotional intensity, marvellous power of analysis, sensitiveness to strong colors, insensitiveness to faint modulations of sober tint, curious enjoyment of quaintness and rigidity in arrangement, absolute indifference to grace, and size, and majesty.

Now as the greatest artists hitherto have become synthetic as they approached maturity, and used analysis only for the acquisition of knowledge, it seemed likely that after a while the Pre-Raphaelites would begin to feel that so long as they combined the greatest possible amount of analysis with the smallest allowable degree of synthesis they were paying unequal worship to the dual deity of art. The pendulum had swung so far on the side of analysis, that it needed little foresight to predict a movement in the opposite direction.

Besides, there was the question of individual temperament, a consideration not to be overlooked in dealing with an art so peculiarly the product of individual organizations.* It needed not only wonderful patience to produce

* For example, the temperament of Horace Vernet. For Vernet to have attempted to paint like Holman Hunt would have been artistic suicide. Vernet, at the best, could only have made himself a third-rate Pre-Raphaelite, and as such would not have expressed one-hundredth

Pre-Raphaelite pictures, it needed also the peculiar faculty of dwelling long on one subject. Some men can do this quite contentedly, others cannot endure to do it all. Leonardo really *liked* to be long about a picture, did not wish to see it finished, as some mothers do not wish to see their children become men and women. On the other hand, artists like Turner and Gustave Doré, being pressed by multitudes of conceptions, are impatient to get the idea of to-day expressed that to-morrow may be given to to-morrow's thought. It is evident that artists of this latter class will always seek for expeditious modes of expression, and refuse long elaboration, not because they do not see detail, but because they would rather utter a thousand thoughts briefly than ten thoughts elaborately.

Then, again, though Pre-Raphaelite work *when at its best* is very admirable, its aims are so high, and its pretensions so great that it does not admit of mediocrity. No painter, who held large views of his art, could endure to produce second-rate Pre-Raphaelite pictures. Art which professes only to suggest and remind, may fail in many things, and still be precious to us for its obscure hints of natural beauty; art which professes to be perfect imitation makes such immense claims that success is proportionately more difficult. Pre-Raphaelitism was only *too* uncompromising; for the art of painting is confessedly a compromise. And the minuter the detail you profess to give, the more accurate must your information be. Prudent men keep *within* their science, and do not profess to know every thing; he who offers to tell us the *whole* truth, has need of enormous knowledge.

It is on these grounds that I have always felt convinced that the Pre-Raphaelites would not effect that universal

part of the conceptions he lived to realize. Such as he was, without being in the strict sense a great painter, he expressed his particular talent most completely; and I argue that if he had attempted to be a Pre-Raphaelite that particular talent of his would never have found expression at all. But there need be little apprehension, in these days, of such loss as this would have been; for men of original genius will not now submit to any system, however excellent in itself, when submission would involve the stifling of their own faculties, and the abdication of their own place.

and permanent revolution in our school of painting which Mr. Ruskin seems at one time to have anticipated. That they have exercised a great and, on the whole, a beneficial influence is indisputable; that they will succeed in imposing the two principles of intellectual conception and technical elaboration on the English school generally is not to be hoped for. Still less is it probable that they will revolutionize the disciplined schools of the Continent.

One of the conclusions about painting, to which I have been most unwillingly driven, is that it is not *necessarily* an intellectual occupation. There are painters who are intellectual men, and such men put an intellectual element into their art; but there are also very good painters who are not, in the strict sense of the word, intellectual. Good eyes, and skilful fingers, are of more practical importance to a painter than understanding. This is a reason why an intellectual *school* of painting is not likely to be realized, for in every school there will be men of strong sight and manual skill without much power of thought.

Then as to minute elaboration, the mightiest painting refuses it almost always, for master-painters will not waste months in expressing facts by copyism which they can express better *by their magic* in a day. That magic may be defined as the power of representing things with profounder truth by substitution of abstract results of study, than by imitation of the object. As the Pre-Raphaelites acquire this power, they will desist from minute elaboration; and other artists, endowed from the beginning with this gift, will reject the Pre-Raphaelite discipline.

It was curious to observe this turning point in the career of Millais. The following quotation from Mr. Ruskin's Notes on the Academy Exhibition of 1857 marks it: "The change in his manner, from the years of Ophelia and Mariana to 1857, is not merely Fall, it is Catastrophe; not merely a loss of power, but a reversal of principle; his excellence has been effaced, 'as a man wipeth a dish — wiping it, and turning it upside down.'" The truth is, that Millais, before going on his new tack,

was for a while arrested in his progress, even visibly receding, his uncertain sails shivering powerless in the wind. And Mr. Ruskin, the most keenly interested onlooker, feeling instinctively that the Pre-Raphaelite period was over, raised this bitter cry of disappointment and regret. Since then Millais paints better than ever, but he is no longer a Pre-Raphaelite. Take, for instance, the picture called "My first Sermon," a most charming, loveable, covetable work, but not in any obvious way bearing the marks of Pre-Raphaelitism. The thought is pretty and interesting, but not profound; the execution skilful, but not elaborate. It is a quite successful bit of popular painting, equal to Leslie in felicity of expression, superior to him in color. But if "My first Sermon" is a Pre-Raphaelite work, I am at a loss to recognize the signs by which it is known as such. And the illustrations to popular novels which Millais has of late years so richly given us do not visibly exemplify the principles of Pre-Raphaelitism.

It is of course difficult to prove positively that any artist of the realist schools is or is not a Pre-Raphaelite, because the Pre-Raphaelites have never publicly defined their doctrines; wisely leaving the public and the critics to find them out as they best might, and by this policy reserving much liberty of action. I have the greatest respect for Millais, who, though very unequal and with grave defects, seems to me as unquestionably a man of genius as either Keats or Tennyson, and as sure of immortality. But if Millais is a Pre-Raphaelite now, I see nothing to exclude Landseer, or Leslie, or any other thorough modern, from the sect. We have been told that one important distinction of Pre-Raphaelitism was that, whereas other men illustrated poets and novelists, the Pre-Raphaelites were to be their own poets, yet as Leslie illustrated Cervantes so Millais illustrates Mr. Anthony Trollope. We have been told that another distinction of Pre-Raphaelitism was its care and labor in detail, but the present work of Millais is not so careful as that of Gérôme, or, Meissonier, or Blaise Desgoffe, yet nobody

calls these men Pre-Raphaelites. We may be told now that this popularized art is the natural development of Pre-Raphaelitism, which is becoming freer in workmanship and more popular in subject; that is to say, that the school has developed itself into its opposite, as Protestantism sometimes "develops" itself into Romanism. This is not development: it is reaction. Now either Pre-Raphaelitism has a peculiar doctrine, or it has not. If it has a peculiar doctrine, in what respect is that doctrine exemplified in the present work of Millais, and *not* exemplified in the work of Landseer and Frith? And if Pre-Raphaelitism has no peculiar doctrine at all, — what is it?

There are states of the public mind which produce artistic results at particular times which, for lack of the necessary heat and excitement, no subsequent epoch can ever engender. And in these days we live intellectually so fast that such epochs occur every twenty years. They leave their mark in some work of inimitable art, never again to be produced by the intelligence of man. *Marmion*, *Ivanhoe*, *Faust*, *Don Juan*, *Jocelyn*, *In Memoriam*, *Vanity Fair*, are not to be written twice. And I could name as many pictures which are not to be painted twice, but in this place it is only necessary to point to Hunt's "Finding of the Saviour in the Temple," as the culminating and representative Pre-Raphaelite figure picture, and Brett's "Val d'Aosta" as the culminating and representative Pre-Raphaelite landscape. Those pictures had the qualities, *and the defects*, of the sect. There could be no question about how those works ought to be classed; they stood as visibly distinct from other forms of art as soldiers in full uniform do from a crowd of civilians.

But since then, Pre-Raphaelitism, having produced the one or two representative works in which it seems to be a law of nature that each new thought shall embody itself, is losing its individuality, and melting into other art as an iceberg drifting southwards slowly melts and loses itself in the warm seas that there surround it. It will exist still, as water exists mingled with other water; but it will be no longer a definite, visible, isolated power.

Force is not lost, but it becomes untraceable when diffused, and is only recognizable by us when concentrated, or at its source. Pre-Raphaelitism has been unquestionably a force,—a very great force,—and its effects, though it may cease to exist, will be lasting. It was a strong and beneficial reaction from indolent synthesis to laborious analysis, and from mental inactivity to new thought and emotion,—a great sharpening of the sight and rousing of the intellect, and even a fresh stimulus to the feelings. The irresistible pendulum swung then towards analysis and thought; it is now swinging back towards synthesis and manual power. Such reactions take place in the private lives of individual artists. They try hard for synthesis and unity, then find the details weak, and give themselves up to analysis; after that, they perceive, shortly, an alarming lack of unity, and so swing back to synthesis.

The representative of the most recent tendency is Mr. Whistler. Of his work as an etcher, I shall have to speak at length before long. As a painter, he has the rare faculty of *true* oil-sketching, selecting, with certainty, the most essential truths. Mr. Whistler's merits may be best expressed in this way: Given a canvas, so many feet square, and so many hours to cover it in, Mr. Whistler will put more truths, and truths of greater importance, upon that canvas, in the given time, than most of his contemporaries. Such a faculty is of the utmost value to a landscape painter, on account of the rapid changes of vegetation.* Mr. Whistler seems insensible to beauty, which is a grievous defect in any artist; but his work is redeemed from vulgarity by strange sensitiveness to color and character. It is audacious, almost impudent, in manner; but it is not affected, though it looks so at first, and

* No summer landscape can be painted from nature if it takes more than a month, no spring or autumn landscape if it takes more than a fortnight. I am disposed to believe now that the most precious results of landscape painting are frank and genuine color sketches done from nature at high speed. Any thing further must be done in the studio, and it is doubtful whether the studio elaboration is in all cases worth the rough note from nature.

even its audacity is based on directness and simplicity of purpose. I blamed his "Woman in White," because it was hideous; and hideous pictures are always detestable, however meritorious. But the "Woman in White" was full of strong work.

Nature is perpetually breaking bounds. We hedge thought round with formulas; and, in a few years, being too narrow, they are broken before we are aware of it. The Pre-Raphaelite boundaries exist no longer. "Even Pre-Raphaelitism," says Mr. Ruskin, "is degenerating and forgetting the principle with which it set out—that nobility of subject is a main thing in painting; nay, the Pre-Raphaelites are forgetting even conscientiousness of workmanship." Still, we owe them the acknowledgment that they taught us, at a time when we needed the lesson, that nature repays every new analysis, and that art may be grave and thoughtful.

XI.

THE PAINTER IN HIS RELATION TO SOCIETY.

“IF a man applies himself to *servile* or mechanic employments, his industry in those things is a proof of his inattention to nobler studies. *No young man of noble birth or liberal sentiments, from seeing the Jupiter at Pisa would desire to be Phidias, or from the sight of the Juno at Argos to be Polycletus.*” So says old Plutarch; and we may therefore argue from this passage alone, if other proofs were wanting, that the artist was, in his time, socially considered, a despised person. The secret of Plutarch’s contempt for Phidias lies in the word *servile*. He respected *government* and not *servitude*. He liked the rough virtues, often in reality very great vices, which lead men to power, and he had an honest contempt for such mean genius as that of Phidias and Polycletus, which exercised itself in the service of mankind.

Most people are of Plutarch’s opinion; he only gave a frank expression to one of the fundamental instincts of humanity. The thermometer does not more accurately indicate the precise degree of caloric present in any fluid, than the popular respect the degree of governmental power present at any given epoch in any one class of society. Its indications are quite reliable. Men respect only *power*. They detect the exact amount of it present in any class of their contemporaries with an instinct which is absolutely infallible, and in strict proportion to the amount of power present is the degree of deference yielded.

The sword has at all times been an exceedingly powerful instrument. So the military profession has always been in the highest degree respectable, and from the days of Alexander of Macedon, downwards, kings and emperors

have practically adopted this profession without derogating from the dignity of their birth.

When there is little intellectual enlightenment the fear of the supernatural tyrannizes over the masses. An eminently intelligent class has always turned this vague dread to political account as an instrument of authority stronger than weapons of steel, and the temple has menaced the world as sternly as the fortress. By this threatening, authoritative attitude, the sacerdotal body first conquered the world's respect. This position was not gained, nor ever could have been gained, by mild persuasion, but by rack and red-hot pincers in this world, and menaces of eternal tortures for the next.*

Then, in a more civilized state, when the sword can no longer settle private quarrels, and interests become more complex, a third class makes itself felt as a power in society, more subtle and silent in its workings than the other two, yet gradually absorbing into its own hands the government of property, the guardianship of orphans, and the administration of justice. It is to the vast, though unrecognized, influence of barristers and attorneys that the legal profession owes that part of its social position for which the high public functionaries, chosen from its ranks, are not in themselves a satisfactory explanation. There is, however, a very curious social distinction between the two branches of this profession, which I reserve for the present, and yet which will itself be found to bear out the argument that political power is the real standard of social respectability.

Since the latter half of the eighteenth century two or three other occupations have risen into such importance as to rival the elder professions.

To spin cotton thread, to weave calico, to stain it with patterns, to manufacture carpets, and blankets, and even steel pens, have become avenues to political power. And to do these things on a large scale is rapidly becoming respectable, even in the strictest conventional sense. A

* If the reader doubts this, let him study the history of the Middle Ages.

little external roughness of manner, and provincialism of dialect, may retard the recognition of the industrial chiefs in their true character, but the people will find out before long, who have not found it out already, that when a man governs a thousand artisans he is a leader of men and a power in the state. When this is generally understood the great industrial chief will rank side by side with the great land-owner in the popular estimation.

Even the mere capitalist, who lives quietly on the interest of his fortune, is respected for the great reserve of power represented by the sum he possesses. But when he employs this power actively in the affairs of other individuals he becomes the centre of forces whose complicated effects it is impossible to calculate ; and so the money-lender has a place in the modern world which becomes stronger in proportion to the increased security of his transactions, and the extension of commerce, whereof he holds the strings. "I very early discerned," said Heinrich Heine, "that bankers would one day be the rulers of the world."

But the social history of literature is the best illustration of the inherent respectability of power. In the days when Sir Everard Waverley, of Waverley Honor, received political intelligence through the medium of Mr. Dyer's manuscript "Weekly News-letter," and Mr. Dyer would often humbly plead for an extra gratuity from the gentlemen who patronized him on account of the expense he had been put to in collecting information in coffee-houses,—in those days, I fancy, the provincial magnate had little conception of the power which the successors of good Mr. Dyer were destined to wield in these latter days, when a newspaper correspondent is respectfully received by a Governor-General of India, and confidentially informed by a commander-in-chief of the details of his strategy, on the sole condition that he will not divulge them at the seat of war. Writers are often earnest, but they are not respected for their earnestness ; they are often humane and tender-hearted, but they are not respected for their gentleness ; but the writer who is sure of the public ear, as, for instance, the contributor to an established periodical, has an

appreciable social and political power, and it is for that power alone that literature has begun to be respected.

Before a man of rank will enter any profession he always asks himself, more or less consciously, "Will this business help me to govern?" and if a career does not open a fair prospect of governmental influence he will not concern himself with it.

Perhaps we ought to respect virtue more than power, but we don't. Moral excellence, as an abstraction, or in men long ago dead, who are become, as it were, mere shadows and abstractions, is very much extolled indeed; but somehow, when embodied in an individual person actually existing in the world, the noblest qualities are apt to lose their ideal lustre.

The reader may answer this by an appeal to history, and try to show how tyrants have been hated and resisted. But no student who has read history by the light of common sense can have failed to perceive that it is not the strong, steady tyranny of *power* that has ever been regarded with disfavor by the masses, but only the spasmodic cruelties of weak sovereigns, whose power was slipping from their grasp. It was the weakness of the Neapolitan dynasty, and not its cruelty, which caused our political chiefs to speak with such contempt of it in the House of Commons. Had the King of Naples been a powerful sovereign, Lord Palmerston would have spoken of him in the same respectful language he was accustomed to employ when alluding to an august ally, his Imperial Majesty the Emperor of the French. And all through what we are taught to call "History," you will find that the strong tyrant is very much respected, and that it is on the weak tyrant, his descendant, that all his sins are visited, both by the people who rebel against him, and the writers who hold him up to the execration of a discriminating public.

I suppose that this instinctive reverence for the mighty is a natural law essential to the cohesion of society. Developed to excess, it becomes, however, ineffably mean and contemptible. Mr. Thackeray's ideal of a "snob" is merely a person in whom this instinct predominates.

If the reader has ever felt the peculiar physical sensation produced on the nervous system by contact with some individual of enormous power, he will not think it an exaggeration to attribute much of the influence exercised by very powerful persons over the rest of their species to a sense existing in the nature of every one of us which was intended to *feel* this peculiar influence, and prepare men beforehand for submission. Who could have touched Cæsar without feeling this magnetic emanation? Dr. Livingstone says that the contact of the lion's paw conquers the will of its victim, and makes him insensible to its bite. So a great human power fascinates the imagination and subdues the will. Before the kings of men open their lips the listeners are ready to obey. In the presence of a Russian autocrat the head swims with a vague sense of the infinity of his influence and the inconceivable vastness of his empire. Down the great scales of life this effect on the imagination becomes less and less in proportion to the diminution of power, till it causes mere politeness to the landed proprietor, who is king only of a few acres.

An old gentleman, a Frenchman, whom I knew very well, was one day walking down the Rue Vivienne in Paris. He was absorbed in calculations, for he was a member of one of the greatest financial houses in Europe, and it was a busy time for their house, which had large transactions with embarrassed sovereigns. Lost to all surrounding objects, my friend suddenly came in contact with a foot passenger walking in the opposite direction, lifted his hat to apologize, and found himself face to face with a little man who at that time was making a considerable noise in the world. The little man whom my friend M. O—— had jostled off the footpath was the Emperor Napoleon the First, then at the very height of his power, taking a quiet walk with Duroc, as his custom was.

Now M. O—— told me this story one evening as we were walking together down the same street, and I remember he commented on the odd sensation he had experienced. Having a turn for philosophical reflection, he was much interested in trying to account to himself for a

certain fascination which had fixed him to the spot for some minutes after the accident. He had felt the shock of immeasurable power. The man whom M. O—— had pushed off the footpath was at that very hour shaking the thrones of the world. Every king in Europe feared him. My friend felt, no doubt, as if he had come into contact with something superhuman.

I can realize the sensation from having myself experienced it in a less degree. Once, at a ball in Paris, I was talking with an old French general, when a third person, also in uniform, came and shook hands with my neighbor. "*Eh bien, comment ça va-t-il?*" were the stranger's remarkable words, — nothing in them to astonish or electrify one. Yet I *did* feel an odd, tingling sensation, for the stranger's waxed moustachios stood out like rats' tails, the eye was dull and glassy, the face expressionless, like a bronze bust, and the nose strangely familiarized to me already in *Punch*. It was Napoleon III.

The other half of the argument, namely, that political impotence is held contemptible, is just as easy to prove. Society does not concern itself with the inherent nobleness of any occupation, only with its governmental power. For instance, the medical profession, in itself one of the very noblest of callings, and one of the most glorious fields in the realms of human exertion, is only considered respectable by the middle-class, — the upper, or governing classes do not own it. People of rank receive their "medical attendant" with no more notion that he is their intellectual equal than if he were only a superior species of hair-dresser, or any other *attendant* (note the peculiar offensiveness of the phrase). The work of surgeons and physicians requires very careful training, and when it passes out of the limits of routine calls into exercise the very highest moral and intellectual qualities; but these men have no place in society because their profession does not conduct them to political power. If a nobleman's daughter were to form an attachment for her "medical man," her family would be thrown into the uttermost consternation, whereas she may marry a country parson without loss of caste.

Another very curious illustration is supplied by the two branches of the legal profession. The bar is an avenue to political power, but an attorney's office is not (except in so far as a country solicitor in large practice may sometimes influence an election). So this busier and more generally lucrative branch is not recognized by society on equal terms. An attorney is a gentleman by Act of Parliament, but the higher circles of society do not ratify the parliamentary title by receiving him as an equal, and younger sons of noble families never by any chance get themselves articulated to attorneys. The attorney, however, indemnifies himself for his social wrongs by patronizing barristers at their entrance into life, and governing proprietors through his intimate knowledge of their private affairs.

All these inconsistencies are at once explained by the theory that *power* is respectability. The more power a man has, the more he will be respected, and the less power he has, the less he will be respected, till we come down to those individuals whose power is so exceedingly limited as to excite no sensations of respect whatever.

Now I should like to know how a man is ever to make himself terrible by painting pretty little pictures, or even great big ugly ones? Who is afraid of a picture? It cannot kill one like a sword, nor damage one's fair fame like a newspaper, nor hold one up to the reprobation of the godly like a preacher. It is absolutely innocuous. People are not forced to buy it, nor even to look at it. There it hangs in its pretty gilt frame, saying, "Pray come and look at me, ladies and gentlemen; I am really very beautiful and very true, and — my price is marked in the catalogue."

And accordingly, if we study the social position of the artist, we shall find it slippery, unsatisfactory, and insecure. Goethe observes somewhere, that though the artist is a privileged person, and though his talent has an inward certainty, its outward relation is peculiarly uncertain. One can easily fancy that the position of a great Greek sculptor in a society holding Plutarch's notions must have been any thing but pleasant. And since, as I said before, the world generally is quite of Plutarch's opinion, the modern

successors of Phidias, whether in sculpture or other fine art, find a frank and equal intercourse with the general world next to impossible for them.

The best and truest pictures of contemporary manners are, undoubtedly, to be found in what the French call "studies of manners," or those modern novels in which the society of to-day is painted from the life. Let us see how the painter's relation to this society is sketched by one or two of the ablest hands.*

In "The Newcomes," when young Clive devotes himself to painting, it is considered a family disgrace by his friends, whose place in society, by the way, is of quite recent acquisition, and whose origin is so low that they are all forced to tell lies about it. But Clive is not on the road to power, and of course, without power, gets no consideration from the governing classes. His occupation withdraws him from the society of gentlemen, and we find him, not at university wine-parties with young lords, but working at Gandish's with a set of low flatterers for his associates, and the son of a domestic servant for his most intimate friend. That reverend puppy, Charles Honeyman, the perfect incarnation of all that the weakest women most deeply love and reverence, says with bland dignity, "My dear Clive, there are degrees in society which we must respect. You surely cannot think of being a professional artist. Such a profession is very well for your *protégé* — but for you . . ." when Clive vehemently interrupts him. Mrs. Hobson Newcome tells the Colonel that his boy is not good enough to associate with hers, because "he lives with artists and all sorts of eccentric people," whereas hers "are bred on quite a different plan. Hobson will succeed his father in the bank, and dear Samuel," she trusts, "will go into the Church." The father of these hopeful young gentlemen calls Clive's devotion to art "this madcap freak of turning painter." "Confound it," says he, "why doesn't my brother set him up in some respectable business? I ain't

* Part of what follows is abridged from a review article contributed by myself to the "West of Scotland Magazine and Review," and entitled "Artist-Life in Fiction."

proud; I have not married an earl's daughter . . . but a painter! hang it, a painter's no trade at all — I don't fancy seeing one of our family sticking up pictures for sale. I don't like it, Barnes," and two minutes afterwards he heartily damns "all literary men, all artists, the whole lot of them!" The said Barnes agrees pleasantly with his uncle, and farther on in the book speaks of his cousin Clive as "a beggarly painter, an impudent snob, an infernal young puppy," and so forth. Even Clive's father did not seriously believe that his son would live by painting pictures, but considered him as a young prince who chose to amuse himself with painting. Mr. Barnes mentions at home "a singular whim of Colonel Newcome, who can give his son twelve or fifteen hundred a year, and makes an artist of him." Ethel writes to the Colonel from Baden, "You will order Clive not to sell his pictures, won't you? I know it is not wrong, but your son might look higher than to be an artist. It is a rise for Mr. Ridley, but a fall for him. An artist, an organist, a pianist, all these are very good people; but, you know, not '*de notre monde*,' and Clive ought to belong to it."* Mrs. Mackenzie, when Clive in his adversity tries to support the house by his labor, says, "It is most advisable that Clive should earn some money by that horrid profession he has chosen to adopt — trade I call it." And Thackeray himself says, "The Muse of Painting is a lady, whose social position is not altogether recognized with us as yet. The polite world permits a gentleman to amuse himself with her, but to take her for better or for worse! forsake all other chances and cleave unto her! to assume her name! many a respectable person would be as much shocked at the notion, as if his son had married an opera-dancer. However, it never entered into Clive's head to be ashamed of the profession

* Ethel's reasoning here is feminine. She confounds together persons of creative and of merely interpretative power. They ought to be clearly separated, thus:—

CREATORS.	INTERPRETERS.
Poets.	Translators.
Original Painters.	Engravers and Copyists.
Musical Composers.	Musical Performers.

he had chosen, and though he saw many of his school-fellows in the world, these entering into the army, others talking with delight of college and its pleasures or studies, yet, having made up his mind that art was his calling, he refused to quit her for any other mistress, and plied his easel very stoutly."

But Thackeray is too profound a student of human nature not to let this continual opposition have its natural effect in the end. The fact is, our affections must be very deeply engaged in a pursuit to enable us to follow it steadily against the opinion of all around us; and Clive, not being a born painter like J. J., but only a lad of good abilities (not of genius in any wise), having the choice of war with his father and his wife, or the virtual abandonment of his art, does as most of us would under similar circumstances, — pursues the art by stealth with just sufficient ardor to make his wife jealous of it, but not half enough ardor for success in it. So he is miserable (being in a false position), and J. J. feelingly laments for his friend: "Among them they have taken him away from his art. They don't understand him when he talks about it, they despise him for pursuing it. Why should I wonder at that? my parents despised it too, and my father was not a grand gentleman like the Colonel." Ultimately, when restored to prosperity by his marriage with Ethel, Clive shaves his beard and abandons his art. The moral of the story is thus admirably completed.

This J. J. Ridley, the true artist, is only the son of a domestic servant. Thackeray could not have made him the son of a gentleman, because the obstacles placed by society in the path of a man of genius of sufficient worldly rank to bring him within its influence are nearly insurmountable, and all the terrible difficulties of poverty and ignorance are as nothing in comparison with the one difficulty of facing social degradation. Gentlemen are the born officers of the social army, and they do not like to have their epaulettes torn off. But men in the ranks may do the menial work of the world, because their position is so humble already that it cannot well suffer by any

act not absolutely criminal. So the butler's boy may paint pictures as he might have brushed boots, and nobody considers it a degradation, except his parents, who probably had higher views for their son, and would have liked to see him in livery.

The other professional artists, to whom Mr. Thackeray introduces us, are not men who would naturally take a strong position amongst gentlemen. Gandish, the martyr to "Igh art," tells Smee, the portrait-painter, the secret history of a grand work. "The models of the hancient Britons in that pictur alone cost me thirty pound — when I was a struggling man, and had just married my Betsy here. You reckonise Boadishia, Colonel, with the Roman 'elmet, cuirass, and javeling of the period — all studied from the hantique, sir, the glorious hantique." Again, with what a wonderful command of all the resources of our language does the same eloquent artist discourse to Colonel Newcome on his illustrations of English History. "If you do me the honor to walk into the Hatrium, you'll remark my great pictures also from English 'istory. An English historical painter, sir, should be employed chiefly in English 'istory. That's what I would have done. Why ain't there temples for us where the people might read their history at a glance without knowing how to read? Why is my Alfred 'anging up in this 'all? Because there is no patronage for a man who devotes himself to Igh Art. You know the anecdote, Colonel. King Alfred flying from the Danes took refuge in a neaterd's 'ut. The rustic's wife told him to bake a cake, and the fugitive sovering sat down to his ignoble task, and, forgetting it in the cares of state, let the cake burn, on which the woman struck him. The moment chose is when she is lifting her 'and to deliver the blow. The king receives it with majesty, mingled with meekness. In the background the door of the 'ut is open, letting in the royal officers to announce the Danes are defeated. The daylight breaks in at the aperture, signifying the dawning of 'Ope. That story, sir, which I found in my researches in 'istory, has since become so popular, s r, that hundreds of artists have painted it, hundreds! I,

who discovered the legend, have my picture — here !” In a country where the due aspiration of the letter *h* is considered the indispensable qualification of every one claiming the rank of gentleman, I do not see how Mr. Gandish could ever expect to be recognized as one.

It is observable that, whenever Mr. Thackeray has any thing to say of the artistic class, it is always to leave a strong impression on the reader's mind of the artist's social nonentity. The memory of Becky Sharp's father, for instance, is never recalled in a manner favorable to him, his drunkenness or his poverty being the characteristics by one or other of which he is roughly hauled before the reader from time to time. In “*The Newcomes*” the only supportable artist is J. J. Ridley; but in an aristocratic country like this, people don't particularly affect the society of their domestics or their families, and it is therefore a considerable obstacle to Mr. Ridley's social success that his father is a butler. Gandish is an ignorant old goose, and Smee one of the meanest of toadies. Clive Newcome is not an artist at all; but if, by courtesy, we count him as one, his idleness and infirmity of purpose were no credit to that profession which his swell manners adorned. In the character sketches the essay entitled “*The Artists*” does not contain one single portrait agreeable enough to make one wish to know the original; and by continually exhibiting poverty and meanness on the one hand, or a base and unworthy success on the other, as the opposite poles of the artistic career, the writer easily conveys the impression that the career is in itself inevitably degrading. But this, as I happen to know, was not Mr. Thackeray's own private opinion at all. As an individual, Thackeray loved and revered our art to a degree that no one would believe possible who knew no more about him than is to be gathered from his published works. It is as a satirist only that he laughs at the brotherhood of the brush, and the brethren of that order are no worse off than any other order of men of whom that satirist treats. Without, therefore, complaining in any way of this rough usage, we have only to note with regard to

Thackeray's works, considered as a collection of studies from life, taken by one who scorns the artifice of flattery, that the artists occupy in them much the same position, relatively to the rest of the world, that they do in real life, that is to say a very unsound and unsatisfactory position.

In "St. Ronan's Well" the guests at the *table d'hôte* cannot believe Tyrrell to be a professional artist, simply because his manners are good.

"I doubt, too, if he is a professional artist," said Lady Binks. "If so, he is of the very highest class, for I have seldom seen a better-bred man."

"There are very well-bred artists," said Lady Penelope; "it is the profession of a gentleman."

"Certainly," answered Lady Binks, "but the poorer class have often to struggle with poverty and dependence. In general society they are like commercial people in presence of their customers, and that is a difficult part to sustain. And so you see them of all sorts—shy and reserved, when they are conscious of merit—petulant and whimsical by way of showing their independence—intrusive in order to appear easy—and sometimes obsequious and fawning when they chance to be of a mean spirit. But you seldom see them quite at their ease, and therefore I hold this Mr. Tyrrell to be either an artist of the first class, raised completely above the necessity and degradation of patronage, or else to be no professional artist at all."

There is an exquisite touch in the fifth chapter, which I cannot omit, though a little out of place. Lady Penelope, when Tyrrell avows his artistic character, "had to recede," says Scott—and mark this, for it is thoroughly masterly and characteristic—"from the respectful and easy footing on which he had contrived to place himself, to one which might express patronage on her own part and dependence on Tyrrell's, and this could not be done in a moment." Sir Walter Scott knew nothing of painting, but, of course, observed closely whatever might indicate the social estimate of art. Sir Walter never once pene-

trated beyond the surface of the artistic nature, and, though a great artist himself in his work, was merely a dilettante in feeling. Still, even to him, who had no sympathy whatever with painters, it was plain enough that society, in his day, did not treat them on terms of equality.

As Scott in "St. Ronan's Well," and Thackeray in "The Newcomes," have illustrated our subject, so has Charles Dickens in "Little Dorrit." "Mr. Henry Gowan, inheriting from his father, the commissioner, that very questionable help in life, a very small independence, had been difficult to settle. At last he had declared that he would become a painter; partly because he had always had an idle knack that way, and partly to grieve the souls of the Barnacles in chief who had not provided for him. So it came to pass that several distinguished ladies had been frightfully shocked." And of all the shocked ladies, Gowan's mother was shocked the most. She says to Clennam, "Perhaps you have heard that I have suffered the keenest distress of mind from Henry's having taken to a pursuit which — well!" shrugging her shoulders, "a very respectable pursuit I dare say, and some artists are, as artists, quite superior persons; still, we never yet in our family have gone beyond an amateur, and it is a pardonable weakness to feel a little —" Here Mrs. Gowan sighed.

A very clever and not unfair statement of the causes for the peculiar jealousy with which the rich trading class regards cultivated persons, and, above all, persons artistically cultivated, is put into the mouth of an intelligent man of business by Miss Jewsbury, in her masterly novel, "The Half-Sisters," a novel, by the way, which enters better into the true artist feeling than any other I know. I have never seen the question so skilfully handled; in the few sentences I shall quote, considerations are taken into account which would altogether escape any ordinary observer. The statement that authors and artists have "no professional or business-like habits" is not true, as Mr. Smiles proved in his "Self-help;" but it is perfectly

well placed, dramatically, in the mouth of a mere man of business, being a prejudice common to his class. It is Mr. Bryant who speaks first, a great master-miner.

"Professional people live in a world of their own; and it is very undesirable that they should be introduced into the private circles of the middle classes I have a singular objection to meeting with authors, actors, artists, or professional people of any sort, except in the peculiar exercise of their vocation, which I am willing to pay for. There may be respectable people amongst them, but they are not sufficient to give a coloring to the class; and as a class, there is a want of stamina about them; they have no precision or business-like habits, the absence of which leaves an opening for faults with very ugly names; and persons whose profession it is to amuse others and make themselves pleasing, cannot, in the nature of things, expect to take a very high position. Men cannot feel reverence or respect for those who aspire to amuse them!"

"Well!" cried Conrad, laughing, "I have always observed that heavy, sententious, stupid persons, seem to entertain a species of contempt for those who possess the lighter gifts of being entertaining; but I never heard it made into a theory before. To leave that part of the question, however, let me ask you whether you consider that the province of those who profess the fine arts is only to amuse? Do you think that they have gained the real end of their labor when they are paid for what they do? and do you consider the production of works of art to be a mere mode of earning a living?"

"This is an industrial country," said Bryant; "the great mass of sympathy and intellect takes a practical direction, — a direction that we understand; we have no real knowledge of art, no real instinct or genuine aspiration after it; and I should say that in our hearts we do not respect, love, or honor fine art in any of its manifestations, as we do that which is scientific or practical. To the Italians, to the French even, music and pictures are necessities of life; to us English they only take the guise of ornament or convenience, — of superfluity, in short.

That being the case, we naturally do not feel drawn to the society of artists; we have nothing in common with them, — we do not admire them; neither do we feel disposed to introduce to the society of our wives and daughters a parcel of actors, artists, musicians, and so forth, who have no stake in society, who have little to lose, whose capital is all invested in themselves and their two hands, and who have, therefore, naturally cultivated themselves far beyond what we practical men have had a chance of doing, and are capable of throwing us into the shade in our own houses, whilst they show that they despise us. Let them keep their places, and let us keep ours!”

“But do you allow nothing for the civilizing influence of men of cultivated intellect amongst you?” said Conrad.

“Railroads will do more,” replied Bryant; “every people must work out its civilization in its own way. Love of the fine arts is *not* our speciality: we do not know a good thing from a bad one unless we are told; and the pretence we make about it has a bad effect on our character.”

Painters are not very often alluded to by our poets, though there are plenty of poems about pictures, of which the great majority are trash. The only bit of well-known verse which I just now remember, as really to our purpose, is this line in “The Lord of Burleigh:” —

He is but a landscape painter.

There is, however, a good deal in that little word *but* — as much perhaps as in all I have quoted from Scott and Thackeray. For instance, if I were to say of Mr. Tennyson,

He is but a poet-laureate,

the reader would at once infer that in my opinion the laureateship was not a great office. So we may very allowably conclude, from the significant employment of the word *but*, that in Mr. Tennyson’s estimate of social position a landscape painter must be content to occupy a very humble place.

On the table where I am writing there happens to be a book of travels in the Highlands. I have just been reading a few pages about Loch Long, and have come upon a passage about sketching from Nature. I should have been very much astonished if the art could have been alluded to without some indication of contempt for its professors, and accordingly, just at the end of the paragraph, comes a bit of disdain which is quite comic in its conceit.

“As I was amusing myself here with drawing the Cobler amongst a crowd of herring-fishers, one of them, who had been very intent on the proceeding, said, when it was done, ‘I wish I could draw like you.’ I remarked that herring-fishing was a better trade. ‘I canna think that,’ was the reply. I assured him I made nothing of it. ‘That’s your fault,’ said the fisherman; ‘if I could draw like you, I would make money of it.’ So would I, were I Parmenio.”

Now this is exquisite. SO WOULD I, WERE I PARMENIO. What majestic words! The reader will be quite curious to know the position of a writer who thus modestly mimics the sublime vanity of Alexander. In this little sentence is contained a whole paragraph of pretension. It says quite plainly, “My position in society is so exalted, that in comparison with such men, as Reynolds* and Rubens,† I am as the conqueror of the world to one of his generals;” or, stated like a question in the Rule of Three, as Alexander was to Parmenio, so am I to — any painter you please. Is it a prince who speaks thus haughtily? I turn to the title-page, and find that the book was written by Dr. Macculloch, a geologist.

An impression prevails in England that artists have a better position in France. This is partly true, and partly a mistake. From what I have seen, personally, across the channel, I should say that the position of a painter in

* I declare I think, of all the polite men of that age, Joshua Reynolds was the finest gentleman. — *Thackeray*.

† Rubens was an honorable and entirely well-intentioned man, earnestly industrious, simple and temperate in habits of life, high-bred, learned, and discreet. — *Ruskin*.

France, as compared with his position here, is, on the whole, very little better, except after fame is won, and then I grant that no place in Europe is pleasanter for an artist than Paris, if his art be of a kind that the Parisians can understand. I remember two lines in *L'Honneur et l'Argent*, which indicate very well the position of a *great* artist in France; but I also remember a good many other passages, in that and other books, which indicate with equal clearness the national contempt for the artistic aspirant, or even for the consummate workman whose power has not as yet obtained public recognition. The two lines I shall quote first are spoken by a charming young French lady, excited to enthusiasm by a disinterested and honorable action:—

“C'est plus qu'un grand artiste, et plus qu'un grand seigneur
Plus qu'un homme opulent; c'est un homme d'honneur.”

Now it certainly would never occur to an English girl who happened to be seeking for superlatives of human greatness by comparison with which to exalt a man she admired,—it would occur, I say, to no English girl to put a great artist and a great nobleman side by side as examples of the highest human dignities, and I consider these lines therefore valuable on account of their peculiarly French view of the matter.

In the first act of the *Fiammina*, too, by Mario Uchard, there is a charming conversation between a father and his son, which gives an agreeable idea of the successful artist's life. The father, “Daniel Lambert,” is a celebrated painter; the son, a young poet. It is to be regretted, by the way, that M. Uchard should have selected that particular name for his great artist, it being already the property of a celebrity great in quite another sense. Henri, the son, says to his father:—

“Tu es le premier peintre du temps; grâce à toi je suis riche, ton nom est un talisman pour moi, il me souffle du bonheur comme au temps des fées; toutes les portes s'ouvrent devant lui: ‘C'est le fils de Daniel Lambert,’ dit-on sur mon passage, et l'on te fête en moi, je suis ton clair de lune, je te reflète.”

DANIEL.

Mais tu as bien tes rayons à toi.

HENRI.

Rayons d'emprunt . . . Je me sens bien humble devant cette considération qui me vient toute de toi, et me réduit à rien. Quand on dit, par exemple : "C'est Lambert le fils," il me semble que ce mot de fils est placé là comme une sentinelle qui crie : "Halte-là ! ne confondez pas : celui-ci n'est pas le célèbre."

It is also observable that when Lord Dudley, a distinguished English "patron," comes to see Lambert, his manner is any thing but patronizing. Lambert, for reasons I cannot stop to explain, declines the commission Lord Dudley has come to offer, requesting him to pardon the refusal. On this his lordship answers : —

"Je ne saurais vous en vouloir, monsieur ; je venais en solliciteur, et je n'ai pas perdu ma journée, puisque j'ai eu l'honneur de vous voir."

Which is all very civil and polite.

In the third act Henri challenges Lord Dudley, and in the course of their conversation I find an expression which we have met with elsewhere. Henri says, page 85 : —

"Je pourrais avoir recours à un de ces outrages publics qui ferment toute retraite, mais entre gens de notre monde, un tel éclat ferait rechercher la cause de mon agression, et c'est ce que je veux éviter à tout prix."

The expression "de notre monde," is what I allude to. We have already met with it in a letter addressed by Miss Ethel Newcome to her uncle the Colonel, in which she says that artists are *not* "*de notre monde.*" The coincidence is curious. Here we have the son of a French artist talking to a rich English lord as if he considered himself in every way his lordship's equal. He is, however, not merely the son of a painter, but of a very famous one, which, in France, is quite as good as a patent of nobility. Yet, when I have granted that celebrated artists are respected at Paris, I cannot admit that the great body

of painters get more consideration there than they do here, or that true art is better loved for itself by our neighbors than by us.

The destruction of the old French noblesse has, as everybody knows, given a character to French society which makes it less than ever like our own. There are, however, some country towns in Lancashire and the West Riding of Yorkshire where a new society, in default of hereditary leaders of ancient descent, accepts for its chief class an aristocracy of recent origin and precarious tenure, based on the fluctuating revenues of commerce. The spirit of speculation in money matters, which is strong enough in these towns to cause great vicissitudes in families, is yet more powerful at Paris, and there is not a place in Europe where the effects of money may be better studied than there. Accordingly much labor and ability have been devoted by several eminent French writers, to the analysis of money power in its relation to life in all its forms — to artistic life amongst the rest. What the modern financial aristocracy of France thinks of artists we will try to gather from Ponsard and others. Balzac and Edmond About will tell us what the vulgar *bourgeoisie* thinks. As for what the old noblesse thought on the subject, that is quite simple, and need not detain us; it looked on all artists as handicraftsmen, and therefore contemptible.

Since the days of Horace the world has regarded with suspicion the praises of critics who have just plentifully feasted at a poet's table, and Horace's satire is no less applicable to the case of painters. Dilettantes are, however, much more likely than artists to become the victims of these post-prandial eulogies, partly, perhaps, because artists do not give so many dinners as dilettantes, but mainly because true artists cannot bear to hear themselves praised by ignorant "*connoisseurs*" (who are always icily indifferent to the peculiar excellencies of individual artists, and who, when they praise, cause the keenest suffering their feebleness is capable of inflicting), and wise painters therefore most carefully avoid showing their work to mis-

cellaneous company. But you can never dine with a thorough dilletante without having to look at his sketches. The first scene in that immortal comedy of Ponsard, "*L'Honneur et l'Argent*," is of this familiar kind. Alas, how many times have we not all passed through similar ordeals!

The best bit here is what the statesman says : —

"It's pretty and good. I believe you paint very well. But leave all that, George, to those who have nothing. A poor hungry devil without a half-penny may daub well or ill a few canvases to get his living, — I don't blame him for it, — though he might, in my opinion, find a better use for a piece of good canvas. But *you*, rich and honored, whom people seek after and are delighted to receive, — we must put other projects into *your* head."

The reader will perceive that this bears a wonderful resemblance to what Clive Newcome's friends used to say to him. It sounds like Mr. Honeyman, though that divine would scarcely have put the matter so forcibly as the statesman does. Why art should only be pursued by penniless persons I do not clearly see; on the contrary, artists seldom do any thing great until they cease to be penniless, and art is, of all professions, the one where private fortune is most desirable and useful. The views of the statesman, however, and indeed of the majority of men who think themselves and their doings of much importance to the world, may be more nakedly expressed thus: "Painting is a foolish and trifling occupation, which, like standing on one's head in the street for chance half-pence, may yet be pardoned in a man who is compelled to degrade himself by sheer hunger; but in a man of fortune, to whom all careers are open, the choice of such a low trade is unpardonable." I believe this to be a very just and not exaggerated statement of the opinion of society on this question, both here and on the Continent.

You may sometimes change the color of a conversation by dropping this word "painter" into it, just as suddenly as a chemist will change the color of a fluid by dropping something into it from another phial. I have done it

sometimes for amusement, and seen lively people become reserved, and courteous people stiff, with a rapidity quite magical. So the authors of "*Les Faux Bonshommes*" are quite right in putting the two little words *avec dédain* for the actor's guidance.

PÉPONET.

Il est peintre.

VERTILLAC, *avec dédain.*

Ah!

Then later in the same conversation, after Péponet has disclosed the name of his intended son-in-law, and Vertillac has sworn that Octave shall not have a penny of his, poor Péponet cries out, —

Oh! mais voilà qui change terriblement les choses!

VERTILLAC.

Pourquoi? puisque vous croyez à l'avenir de monsieur Octave?

PÉPONET.

Un avenir d'artiste! . . . Je suis votre serviteur!

You see Péponet has no great faith in an artist's expectations when his rich uncle abandons him. So Péponet breaks off Octave's marriage with poor Emmeline, and Mademoiselle Eugénie is not sorry.

C'est égal, ma sœur n'ira pas en omnibus.

Such is the young lady's prudent reflection on this circumstance.

Octave, however, marries Emmeline after all, at last, and succeeds in his art, and gets the ribband of the Legion of Honor. Then he has no further need of the services of Monsieur Vertillac; so, of course, Vertillac comes and reconciles himself with his nephew. As a true man of the world, he could do no less. The first rule in the world's ethics is to remember the fortunate and successful, and to treat them with tenderness.

In Balzac's *Ménage de Garçon* we find as a marked characteristic of the people we meet, a characteristic to which Balzac frequently draws our attention him-

self, that they cannot understand a painter and that they do not respect him. Joseph's own mother even, the object of his continual filial love and solicitude, cannot consider him any thing else than a disgrace to her, and the crimes of her elder son weaken her affection less than the innocent pursuits of this. She and her friend Madame Descoings think of art "only as a trade." Philip himself despises and affects to patronize Joseph. When Joseph goes to Issoudun, the people there cannot make him out at all, and dislike him extremely. Hochon sneers at his art. Joseph's mother presents him to these friends with a tone and manner which imply how little she loves him or respects his calling. Rouget tells him he may have the pictures "if they can be of any use to him in his trade." Balzac, I fear, is no more encouraging than Thackeray; at the same time, Balzac shows how he himself loves artists, by describing the artistic nature with such tenderness and kind feeling. The character of Joseph Bridau is one of the purest and noblest in French fiction. Simple, generous, affectionate, a good son, a forgiving brother, an unselfish and high-principled man of genius, he is no unworthy ideal of the artistic nature. So in the "Newcomes," poor J. J. is the gentlest, the humblest, and the most inoffensive creature in the whole book. Very little is said of him, but every time he is mentioned you see that in that little pale and deformed lad dwells a heavenly soul; and Thackeray never rises into such pure strains of eloquence, never so willingly lays aside his lancet of satire, as when he speaks of the butler's boy. In all others, even in the good colonel, he has follies to ridicule or cloaked sins to reveal; but this guileless and meek heart is too holy for dissection. "Whenever you found him he seemed watchful and serene, his modest virgin lamp always lighted and trim. No gusts of passion extinguished it, no hopeless wandering in the darkness afterwards led him astray. Wayfarers in the world, we meet now and then with such purity, and hush while it passes on."

We painters ought to feel grateful to these two great novelists, for, however faithfully they have described the

world's contempt for the painter, they have with equal clearness courageously disclaimed all participation in it. There is, indeed, and must ever be, strong sympathy between true artists, though in different realms of art; and some who work in words, like Balzac and Thackeray, can comprehend and esteem, and also, it appears, even respect, others who express themselves by the less generally understood medium of colors.

M. Edmond About, in the clever "*Mariages de Paris*," gives us the history of a successful young painter who wants to marry the daughter of a rich *bourgeois*. The property of the girl's father consisting in building lots, the story is entitled "*Terrains à vendre*."

After a long speech from the painter to his intended father-in-law, in which, as is the wont of young gentlemen with similar views, he temptingly dwells on the hopeful state of affairs, he pauses for once to take breath, and then adds . . . " 'Je ne sais, monsieur, si je me suis fait comprendre. . . . '

" 'Oui, monsieur,' répondit M. Gaillard, 'et, tout artiste que vous êtes, vous m'avez l'air d'un bien honnête homme.'

" Henri Tourneur rougit ' jusqu'au blanc des yeux.

" 'Excusez-moi,' reprit vivement le bonhomme; 'je ne veux pas dire de mal des artistes: je ne les connais pas. Je voulais simplement vous faire entendre que vous raisonnez comme un homme d'ordre, un employé, un négociant, un notaire, et que vous ne professez point la morale cavalière des gens de votre état. Du reste, vous êtes fort bien de votre personne, et je crois que vous plairiez à ma fille si elle vous voyait souvent. Elle a toujours eu un goût prononcé pour la peinture, la musique, la broderie et tous ces petits talents de société.' " A little farther on, he says, " Vous me dites que vous gagnez des montagnes d'or, et je vous crois, bien qu'il me semble assez extraordinaire qu'un seul homme puisse fabriquer pour quatre-vingt mille francs de tableaux en dix-huit mois."

This is all very good, especially the sentence where the bourgeois says that his daughter has always had a strong

taste for painting, and music, and embroidery, and all those little "*talents de société*."

I think I have quoted enough to prove my point. First of all, I said that men respected only power, and did not respect artists because they were not powerful. Then I had to prove that they did not respect artists, and so called a few witnesses who happened to be at hand. I do not want to weary the jury, and so shall call no more witnesses. There is no need.

We cannot have the external force of organized bodies without their internal restrictions. And it would demand the most profound wisdom to organize such persons as artists, so as neither to impose a single needless restriction, nor omit a necessary one. A soldier or priest, if asked to organize us, would hedge us round with a hundred observances in no way conducive to the objects of our association, and obstacles to individual advancement. Better our present inorganic confusion than such a soulless order! We are like the sands of the sea — bad material to make ropes of, yet rich with inestimable treasure. You may search amongst it if you will, and find the scattered gems. But who shall build all these loose stones together into strength, and still not hide a single precious one?

It is a necessity and not a defect of great organizations, that the caprice of the individual should be restrained by an overpowering conventionalism. Organization always infers discipline. And discipline rules even the most trivial minutiae. Being the opposite of individualism, it hisses and boils with rage when it detects the presence of the hostile element, as an alkaline solution effervesces when an acid one is poured into it. Even in such trifles as the dressing of the hair, discipline descends to the minutest details all the world over, for it is its nature to extirpate the individualism even of wayward locks. The nobility of discipline is that it sacrifices the single will to the common aim, and, repressing private diversities, replaces them by public union.

Now the arts repose naturally on individualism. What

is most precious in every work of art is the human spirit that produced it. Individual diversities cannot here be suppressed; on the contrary, they must be guarded with jealous care. And there is a certain art power, especially in landscape, which can only be reached in loneliness and isolation.

Again, every powerful organization requires a hierarchy. But since artistic greatness is a gift of nature, and *not* an external distinction, which a king can give, it follows that there might easily be a damaging discrepancy between the hierarchic rank of the artist and his artistic rank. Indeed, this discrepancy already exists. Callcott was knighted and not Turner; but no sovereign could make Callcott greater than Turner.

This individualism of art is its greatest social drawback, because it deprives artists of a certain ground of sympathy with a disciplined society. Military life, being organized and disciplined, trains men for society, which has also an organization and a discipline; whereas, art develops those qualities most which society likes least, — qualities, indeed, which have a decided tendency to unfit men for society.

Again, this individualism is, socially, weakness. So long as the world endures, the men who can band themselves together will be stronger and more respected than those who cannot cohere. Priests laugh at independent thinkers, and call them a rope of sand: the Cardinals will ever bully a lonely Galileo. Every ensign is protected by the proud will of a hundred legions. The inventor is utterly unsupported, till he has made himself famous, and gathered round him a private bodyguard of determined defenders. It is by association that classes of men compel respect, but alas for the original man who can find no associates!

And this, though generally true of all branches of our art, is pre-eminently so of landscape. There have been great schools of the figure, such as those of Raphael and Rubens, where a train of pupils and imitators followed the great master as courtiers follow a Prince, but

the chief of landscape painters was the loneliest of men. Landscape painting has hitherto been the most unsocial of all professions. I know of no employment to be compared to it, in this respect, but that of watching in a light-house. Yet even these watchers are appointed by *threes* to trim the lamps in those stormy towers; but the painter watches the waves alone. For his art is singularly isolating by the very conditions of success in it. It loves desert places; its truest votaries are pilgrims, and vagabonds, and mountain anchorites. I can understand that, to persons whose degree of culture does not permit them to read his motives, a true student of nature must appear a very sulky eremite indeed. Who, for example, that had a genial, friendly heart in his breast, would play such freaks as mine? It is evident that I am a miserable, sulky fellow. What sociable being would ever have lived by himself in a little hut on the moors, like the Black Dwarf, and your humble servant? And these wild follies, this playing at Robinson Crusoe, this pitching of tents on desolate mountains and uninhabited islands, this sailing by day and by night over lonely lakes, — what is it all but the wretched restlessness of a misanthropist? A few, perhaps, may understand that although the studies of the landscape painter lead him into solitude, his heart is still human, and that if he has few companions, it is rather because they do not relish his hard fare, than that his tents are without hospitality, and his tabernacles closed to the friendly guest.

On looking back upon all I have said in this essay on the subject of the relation of painters to society, I think it very probable that the reader may have wondered ere this whether *anybody* is to be found so eccentric as to respect these pariahs. Yes, a few such persons are to be found — they even form a class, though a small one, and every member of this little body is recognizable in an instant by a true artist. The class, I repeat, is a small one — so small, as scarcely to have an appreciable influence in general society, though I hope that it may one day have influence even there.

And who belong to this exceptional class?

All who comprehend art, or can feel its power ; and these only.

This rule is universal. I have *never* met with a person who knew good work from bad, and did not profoundly respect all true artists. People generally pretend to separate their (affected) love of art from their (sincere) contempt for the artist ; but no such separation of sentiment is possible, and all that this ever means is, that the love of art which such people profess is hypocrisy, whilst their scorn of the artist is all sincerity. True lovers of art of course feel no respect for false or incapable workmen ; but we are not considering here any question having reference to the capacity of individual workmen, and the reader will remember that, at the very outset, we began with Plutarch's contempt for Phidias, who, so far from being false or incapable, was the chief of Greek artists and one of the greatest of all time. But this rule is infallible, that, *whoever comprehends art respects all true artists, and whoever despises a true artist is sure to be ignorant of art.*

In all good fiction, those persons who are represented as holding painters in contempt are also of necessity represented as being at the same time ignorant of art. Thus Thackeray says of Honeyman : " But Honeyman knew no more of the subject, than a deaf and dumb man knows of music. He could talk the art cant very glibly, and had a set of Morghens and Madonnas as became a clergyman and a man of taste ; but he saw not with eyes such as those wherewith Heaven had endowed the humble little butler's boy, to whom splendors of Nature were revealed, to vulgar sights invisible, and beauties manifest in forms, colors, shadows of common objects, where most of the world saw only what was dull, and gross, and familiar."

It is necessary to have read " The Newcomes " attentively to have a definite idea of Colonel Newcome's views as to art and artists. He is very civil and courteous to Gandish and Smee, and lets his son be an artist without opposition. Still, Colonel Newcome would not have been

exactly the "gentleman" he is intended to be, had he seriously ranked art along with other manly pursuits. He belongs to the large class, who, without despising artists as necessarily base or ignoble, treat them kindly and consider them very good people, but frivolous, and occupied, not in a very mean pursuit, but in a trifling one. It is obvious that, with such views, Colonel Newcome would be kind, in a somewhat condescending way, to our friends Gandish and Smee, and would even allow his son full liberty to pursue his art, *as an amusement*, which was the light in which the colonel always regarded it. But when the colonel's great banking speculation is at its height, and Clive still tries to pursue his art, the colonel cannot see without bitterness that this boyish pastime of painting interferes with the serious duties of Clive's position as the son of a speculator. It is a vexation to the colonel when Clive goes to his painting-room, puts on his old velvet jacket, and works with his palette and brushes. "Palettes and brushes! Could he not give up those toys when he was called to a much higher station in the world?"

This gentlemanly degree of contempt for art and its professors, which, however, is by no means excessive, not being either haughty or insolent, or even unkind, is yet thus severely accounted for by the satirist:—

"The world enters into the artist's studio, and *scornfully* bids him a price for his genius, or *makes dull pretence to admire it*. What know you of his art? *You cannot read the alphabet of that sacred book, good old Thomas Newcome!* What can you tell of its glories, joys, secrets, consolations?"

The reader will observe in the words I have italicised a strong confirmation of my argument that *scorn* of the artist is never accompanied by real admiration for his art, only by a *dull pretence* at admiration. Thackeray cannot help reiterating this great truth; and in this passage it is stated in as direct a manner as a novelist usually employs.

I have quoted a striking paragraph from "Modern Painters," in which Mr. Ruskin expresses some of the

feelings with which *he* looks on the great masterpieces. This is the way Colonel Newcome looked at them:—

“But what was all this rapture about a snuffy brown picture called Titian, this delight in three flabby nymphs by Rubens, and so forth? As for the vaunted antique, and the Elgin marbles—it might be that that battered torso was a miracle, and that broken-nosed bust a perfect beauty. He tried and tried to see what they were. He went away privily, and worked at the National Gallery with a catalogue; and passed hours in the Museum before the ancient statues, desperately praying to comprehend them, and puzzled before them, as he remembered he was puzzled before the Greek rudiments as a child, when he cried over *ὁ καὶ ἡ ἀληθὴς, καὶ τὸ ἀληθές.*”

And so Colonel Newcome's contempt for the pursuit of art is quite satisfactorily accounted for.

In like manner Balzac makes Rouget ignorant of the value of his own pictures, and indicates how little Philippe Bridau knew of the matter, by making him steal a *copy*, mistaking it for the original. But it is Agatha, the mother, whose ignorance is most dwelt upon, even in the last touching scenes, justly, and with profound artistic truth; for her contempt for art is one of her most strongly marked characteristics throughout the book. So, on her very death-bed, when she repents of her conduct to Joseph, he says to her, “*Est-ce que tu n'es pas la douce et l'indulgente compagne de ma vie misérable? Tu ne comprends pas la peinture? . . . Eh! mais ça ne se donne pas.*” And later, one evening, looking at a picture, she exclaims aloud, “*Oh, comme je voudrais savoir ce que c'est que la couleur!*”

Nor have the novelists failed to enforce the other half of the argument. Just as the ignorant people always despise artists, so the better informed ones respect them. Colonel Newcome and Honeyman may despise poor J. J., but Clive Newcome does not; for Thackeray, having represented him as naturally alive to art, and as also possessing some acquired knowledge of the subject, could never have made him despise a true artist like J. J., notwithstanding his humble birth. Clive writes in a letter:

"Our friend J. J., very different to myself in so many respects, *so superior in all*," &c. ; and afterwards, speaking to Pendennis of his father and his wife, he says : "But they neither understand me, don't you see? The Colonel can't help thinking I am a degraded being, because I am fond of painting. Still, dear old boy, he patronizes Ridley ; a man of genius, whom those sentries ought to salute, by Jove, sir, when he passes. Ridley patronized by an old officer of Indian dragoons, a little bit of a Rosey, and a fellow who is not fit to lay his palette for him ! I want sometimes to ask J. J.'s pardon after the Colonel has been talking to him in his confounded condescending way, uttering some awful bosh about the fine arts. Rosey follows him, and trips round J. J.'s studio, and pretends to admire, and says, 'How soft, how sweet ;' recalling some of mamma-in-law's dreadful expressions, which make me shudder when I hear them."

And if we turn to real persons, with what veneration does a certain Oxford graduate speak of the barber's son ! If Mr. Ruskin had not understood art, would he have respected Turner as he did ? In all probability not. Learned, he would have despised Turner as illiterate ; refined, he would have disliked his rough manners ; religious, he could never have borne with his unbelief. Ruskin's veneration for Turner results entirely from his knowledge of art.

And so we come back to our theory of respect. It is power, power, always POWER that commands the respect of men ; for power is always respected when it is recognized. When people, guilty of no evident crime, do not happen to be respected, it may mean, either that they have no power, or that their power is as yet unrecognized. And the power of artists is of so subtle a nature, that very few indeed can ever detect its presence, far less be appalled and awe-stricken by its manifestations.

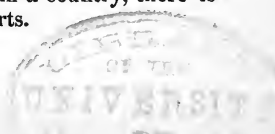
XII.

PICTURE BUYING.

A TRUTH bitter to all men who live by the exercise of their talents is the supremacy of money over talent, and the power of mere gold to enslave the finest and most delicate intelligences. It is useless to endeavor to evade or deny this fact, and it always seems to me that the position of talent in the world would be sounder if its real relation to capital were thoroughly and universally understood. Why not admit frankly, if the fact is indeed so, that the purse is the master and the brain the slave? Our philosophy ought to be able to face any fact, however unpleasant.

The simple truth is, that capital is the nurse and governess of the arts; not always a very wise or judicious nurse, but an exceedingly powerful one. And in the relation of money to art, the man who has money will rule the man who has art, unless the artist has money enough to enable him to resist the money of the buyer. For money alone is powerful enough to resist money, and starving men are weak.

But for capital to support the fine arts, it must be abundant — there must be superfluity. The senses will first be gratified to the full before the wants of the intellect awaken. Plenty of good meat and drink is the first desire of the young capitalist; then he must satisfy the ardors of the chase. One or two generations will be happy with these primitive enjoyments of eating and slaying; but a day will come when the descendant and heir of these will awake into life with larger wants. He will take to reading in a book, he will covet the possession of a picture; and unless there are plenty of such men as he in a country, there is but a poor chance there for the fine arts.



The desire for art being one of our higher appetites, and the desire for *noble* art the very highest of them all, it is of late development, and feeble in its first manifestations; according to the well-known law, that the successive development of human desires is also progressive—that is, from lower desires to higher.

The first desire for art appears to be always for portraiture, and generally portraiture of *self* and self's wife. Certainly there is no subject in the world more interesting to a man than himself, unless it be his wife; but these two subjects may not always be quite so delightful to all the acquaintances of the happy pair, especially considering that they can look at the originals, if their eyes desire that satisfaction. The love of portrait is a vulgar form of egotism so long as it is confined to the conjugal canvases which are so frequently to be seen in this domestic country, hanging in stately gilt frames, over highly polished mahogany sideboards. But when this love of portrait extends itself to one's friends it becomes more respectable, and it speaks well for a man's capacity for friendship if he has a little gallery of those he loves best. "Little," I say, and advisedly; for one narrow room would probably contain the images of all who care for us, yet how precious will those images be when Death shall have done his work! And the portraits of those whom we have not seen, yet who are our companions in thought, or our teachers by their example, may also be deservedly precious to us if procurable. A man would follow his profession none the worse in a cabinet surrounded with the likenesses of those who had most ennobled it. How could a painter, for instance, suffer himself to be unworthily discouraged by the difficulties of his art, if the faces of Reynolds and Velasquez were looking down upon him in their victorious calm?

The desire for family portraits is supplied in our day by photography, with one very happy result—the necessary diminution in scale. The offensiveness of the old conjugal daubs was not merely in the vileness of the execution, but the impertinent importance of the size. Why a worthy

citizen should require thirty square feet of canvas for the exhibition of his elegant person on the walls of his dining-room, passes all understanding. Would not a more modest area suffice? Photography has settled this question * by the necessarily miniature sizes of photographic portraits. But where is the necessity for hanging these photographs about chimney-pieces, in little gilt frames? They are quite ineffective as room decoration, and valueless as art. Pray let them be printed always on paper from collodion negatives, and then kept in a well-bound album.

The first sign of a love of art great enough to go beyond portraits is the purchase of engravings. The subjects of these engravings, when the purchasers select for themselves, indicate their tastes in the clearest manner. There are religious prints, and sporting prints, and licentious prints; prints theatrical, prints military, prints ecclesiastical. Engravings sell enormously in England, and are provided for all classes and all tastes. But these engravings are not so much bought from a love of art as from a feeling of interest in the subjects they illustrate. Thus, when I go into a house where there is a pretty engraving of surpliced choristers, with an inscription in red letters underneath—probably a scrap of Latin—I know that the master of the house, or its mistress, is a Puseyite; but when I behold John Knox thundering from his pulpit, I suspect that the head of the family has a leaning to the Low Church. But I do not infer that either cares for art. And if you penetrate to the private chambers of young bachelors, like Mr. Harry Foker, you will find prints of a more objectionable character, indicating a taste for fine female ankles and well-developed busts. Yet in all this there is no interest in art.

* This is unhappily a mistake. Since writing the above passage, I have seen a dreadful announcement in the newspapers, that the Prince of Wales has had a photograph of himself taken *the size of life*! O lamentable example! O most pernicious precedent! Fancy the dining-rooms of our middle classes decorated with photographs of their owners as large as life, with every detail of lace and jewelry mercilessly inflicted upon our wearied eyes! Let princes be taken of the actual size, or even magnified seven times if it suits them, but let humble subjects modestly content themselves with card miniatures in an album.

Still, even when some care for art *does* really awaken, engravings are always better appreciated than pictures. This for many reasons. The child likes bright *colors*, and the perfectly cultivated man likes good *coloring*; but to the man whose culture is just beginning, color is a great trouble and embarrassment: he does not really enjoy it, and is very glad to be rid of it, always preferring, in his private soul, an engraving from a picture, to the picture itself. Thus, Turner's works are popular in the engravings, and have been widely disseminated by engravers; but the originals are *not* popular, nor ever can be. And independently of the question of color, the mechanical workmanship of a skilful engraver always appears more wonderful to ignorant observers than the handling of the greatest painters, because the intentional roughness of loaded color, or any powerful impasto, looks like daubing and bad execution to them; whereas, in a print this is not possible, and the skilled cutting of the lines has a delicacy of a kind more obvious to ordinary people than the most delicate application of a color film. I believe the great Duke of Wellington was in this stage all his life; so that any reader who happens to be there too may console himself with the reflection that he is in very good company.

But let no one flatter himself that his preference of engravings to pictures is the result of a refined appreciation of *form*, because, however exquisite in their execution, engravings from first-rate pictures are generally very far inferior to the originals, even if judged with reference to form only. All good engravers know the infinite difficulty of perfect copyism in their art; and the thorough mastery of the burin is so rare, that the majority of our popular prints are not to be relied upon for form at all. The designs on wood furnished to our wood engravers are habitually cut to pieces by all but the very best men, and even these are only to be trusted when they do every stroke with their own hands, and do not employ unskilful assistants.

Barbarous Orientals enjoy good color, and can produce

it in their arts. But erudition and the conceit it fosters seem deadly to this instinct, for hitherto the most erudite epochs have colored the most vilely. Latin and Greek, and classical architecture, and academic rules killed color in France; but Decamps, and Troyon, and Breton recovered the faculty in the fields. For its perfect exercise sound health is needed, and not too much poring over books, nor yet too deep an immersion in affairs. Very few people *can* have the faculty in its full strength, because so few have any opportunities of exercising it. There is no color to be seen in our modern towns, and not very much of it in our ordinary English rural landscape under its usual aspects.* Here, in the Highlands, I have it in abundance, and enjoy it to the full all the year round; but these deep purples slashed with emerald green, these wonderful silvery grays, this depth of glowing gold, these scarlet clouds of sunset, these rosy heights of snow, and colored flames of the bright northern aurora, — these things are not visible day by day to every citizen of London or Manchester. And so the sense of color languishes from sheer want of its natural nutriment, and the houses of our rich middle class are covered outside with white stucco instead of colored marbles, and hung within with works of art in which black printers' ink is the only pigment used. And as color is banished from these houses, so it is entirely banished from the festive costume of the men who live in them; so that a party of English gentlemen after dinner form about as colorless a picture as you could find anywhere out of a coal pit. White and black are not color at all, though both very valuable to a colorist; and if ever the capacity to enjoy color shall be given to our descendants, one of the first signs of it will be their rejection of our black and white ideal of festive costume. Why should we all go into mourning every time we go to feast with our friends? Is it because we all know beforehand that the dinner is

* Linnell's works show how much color *may* be found in common English landscape; but it needs to be watched for, because its grandest color effects are rare. The usual appearance of English landscape is better seen in Constable's green and gray than in Linnell's purple and gold.

going to be a dull and melancholy business, for which the most mournful possible costume is the most becoming and appropriate? What a queer sight it is to see a dozen jolly Englishmen at a festive board, dressed precisely as if they had just been to a funeral, and hung up their crape hatbands in the hall! Let any artist imagine what would become of the Marriage Feast at Cana, in the Louvre, if the gentlemen present were all to be dressed in black swallow-tails, with white cravats!

The effect of this indifference to color as it concerns our art is of course a general indifference to painting, as such, because painting is especially the art of color. And the recognition of our art in any country depends, primarily, on the delicacy of the sense of color in that country. Now, there is no nation in Europe at the present day of which it can be truly said that it possesses the color faculty in a national way; some exceptional individuals possess it in each nation, just as some may possess the poetic gift. And so picture buying is an exceptional direction of expenditure; whereas, if the sense of color were as generally acute as the sense of taste, it would be as universal amongst all who could afford it as wine buying is with us.

When this sense of color begins to awaken, people begin to want pictures, but for a long time they believe in *copies*, and, in their private opinion, think them quite as good as the original works of great men. They cannot as yet distinguish between good and bad color, and are very easily satisfied, any thing like elaborate or subtle coloring being an offence to them. I saw a little girl learning French phrases one day, and had the curiosity to open her book, when I came upon a conversation about pictures, supposed to take place in some continental gallery, and which supplied young ladies with the necessary critical observations to be generally applied to pictures in galleries. Amongst them, of course, I found the following:—"Those colors are too lively, they should have been subdued;" that being the stock observation of a whole class of people in the earliest stages of connoisseurship. Provided the hues be confined to brown and gray, they are consid-

ered right and safe by this class of incipient judges, when any thing like nature's brilliance of various color is rejected by them on system as glaring and false. This class of young beginners in picture buying supports a class of artists of its own, consisting mainly of copyists and brown conventionalists, but of course never including a colorist.

These lovers of brown art are naturally victimized by false old masters, for these have the irresistible charm of plenty of thick brown varnish. Considering the extreme difficulty of estimating the value of works by the old masters, and the wildly artificial prices they fetch, it appears rather a melancholy necessity in nature that the most inexperienced picture buyers should throw themselves the most readily in a path so certain to be ruinously expensive, and so spotted with all manner of pitfalls laid by the most accomplished and scientific of swindlers. Nothing is easier than to buy the works of living painters; you go to their own studios, you see them personally, you have ascertained the current prices of their works, and you give them commissions, having settled the three questions of size, and price, and subject. There is little chance of your being deceived, every work so commissioned is quite sure to be authentic, and the painter's regard for his own reputation is your guarantee that he will do his best. The work is delivered to you new and sound, no tricks have been played with it, no clearing away of delicate glazes, no repainting by other hands, no brown varnishing to hide the crudity of bad color. At any rate you see what you buy, and are not deceived. But when you lay out money in old masters, no such certainty is possible. Unless you are really a judge, — and I ask your pardon for observing that this is extremely improbable, — the chances are that you are buying a copy. You cannot refer to the painter himself, for he has been in his grave for centuries. And even if you were sure of their being genuine, the works of dead masters are, when worth having at all, so costly that private persons can scarcely afford to contend for them. Their prices are now out of all proportion to their merits, and merely represent the competition that exists for them.

amongst the great personages and governments of Europe. The *Soult Murillo* in the Louvre, for which the French Government gave twenty-four thousand, six hundred and twelve pounds, does most assuredly not contain as much good painting as you could get from our best living colorists for the same sum. No doubt it is possible that, being a living artist myself, I may unconsciously feel some degree of jealousy when I reflect upon a price so enormous; but how is it that I feel no jealousy of my most successful living rivals and contemporaries, but only satisfaction in their success? It is because, as a rule, they give a fair amount of good work for the money they receive, and, except in very rare instances, their pictures, though richly paid, are still bought with some reference to the amount of thought and art in them, not in blind and bigoted adoration of a great name. It is no honor to the art, nor any proof of a genuine interest and delight in it, when people show themselves so ostentatiously indifferent to the variety of its teaching and its pleasures that they would rather waste a fortune on a single canvas by an old master than buy thirty equally noble masterpieces by modern ones.

Whilst reflecting on this great subject, the buying of genuine old masters at artificial prices, and false old masters at swindler's figures, I remember a novel that I read in my boat one day during the summer, when the breeze was faint, and she was gliding idly on Loch Awe.

In this story, which is entitled "*Cinq cent mille francs de rente*," there is a banker, M. Picard, who gets rich and buys false old masters, and is lamentably fleeced and swindled in all manner of ways. The novelist, Dr. Véron, moralizes a little on the subject. I will quote a paragraph or two, which especially suit my purpose:—

"On poussait Picard vers l'école italienne.

"Dieu sait de combien de faux Raphaël, de faux Véronèse, de faux Titien, de faux Corrège, de faux Léonard de Vinci, l'Europe tout entière est encombrée!

"C'est surtout avec les grandes écoles d'Italie que se fait sur une vaste échelle l'agio en peinture. On sait que

les copies des plus belles œuvres abondaient déjà du temps des maîtres, et se brossaient même dans le voisinage de leurs ateliers. De nos jours encore, des copies des chefs d'école les plus recherchés se font à l'enterprise."

Dr. Véron, it seems, is very much of my opinion as to the superior prudence of buying modern works direct from the artists themselves. If M. Picard had done so, we are told that he would not have been cheated and pilaged as he was:—

"Malheureusement, les nombreux fripons qui exploiterent l'inexpérience de ce nouvel amateur avaient pris soin de le détourner du goût des œuvres modernes. *Si Picard eût visité les ateliers de nos artistes et leur eût fait des commandes, il n'eût point été grugé et dupé par tout ce vilain monde.*"

When people awake to the worthlessness of copies they are in a fair way for learning something about real art, but do not buy judiciously at first; no, nor for a very long time indeed. And for many years the desire for good art will probably remain so very faint and feeble, so entirely secondary to the love of sport, or gambling, or wine, or any other gentlemanly amusement, that the greatest artists can, as yet, only hope for a few chance sovereigns that these ignobler pleasures may, by accident, have left at the bottom of the "patron's" holiday purse. There is an anecdote, in Mr. Gilchrist's "Life of Etty," which affords a most felicitous illustration of this:—

"The manufacturer had that morning put in his pocket £300 to risk in the betting ring, and had lost only £25 of it. *Willing to save the remainder, and lay it up in a more tangible luxury, he threw down £200 in notes before the nervous painter, to whom money in hand was always a temptation.*"

I look upon that anecdote as quite inestimably precious. Who does not see the moral of it? The manufacturer is John Bull, Etty being the fine arts generally, and the betting ring, I fear, only represents too faithfully John Bull's favorite sports and pastimes. If any idle cash happens to remain in the bottom of John Bull's pocket after

he has enjoyed his favorite amusements, he may, perhaps, invest it in the fine arts ; and that is precisely his idea of what he is pleased to call "patronage."

With regard to the kind of pictures most generally bought, we may take the evidence of the exhibitions.

Little figure pictures sell best, — rustic figures as well as any. Bits of incident connected with the domesticities take very well, — mammas, and babies, and cradles, and that sort of thing. Returns of schoolboys, arrivals of interesting letters, scenes of wooing, and billing and cooing : all these are saleable subjects.

Subjects like these are sure of popularity, for the majority of purchasers are always in the first stage, which is marked by the love of the common-place, and indifference to all that is noble in art, whether in subject or treatment.

It is also marked by absolute indifference to landscape ; an indifference which sometimes becomes more active and grows into a hostile feeling, to which landscape art is a cause of irritation and offence. A gentleman said to me one day, with much emphasis, "You know I *hate* all landscapes." The observation, as addressed to a landscape painter, may not have been very polite, but it was quite sincere, and accurately represented the feelings of a whole class of conventionally "well educated" people.

Artists who minister to people in this early stage of culture are the most fortunate both in purse and reputation, because there is the largest circle of persons fit to appreciate their works. They may, of course, be just as good painters as those whose subjects are less popular, whilst they have the immense advantage of a more numerous public. In comparison with landscape painters, they have the same odds in their favor that prose writers have when compared with writers of verse. Mr. Frith is the most fortunate example hitherto known in our art of the happy union of undeniable artistic ability with universal popularity of subject. Every Londoner has been to the Derby, and seen a railway station ; so every Londoner is capable of understanding the subjects of Mr. Frith's great pictures. Mr. Leslie was rather less fortunate in this

respect, being too literary to please the illiterate, and too fond of the past to enlist very strongly the sympathies of those who are absorbed in the noisy present. Etty, with his splendid idealizations of Academy models, could scarcely ever be heartily appreciated, except by Academy students, because they are the only people in these days who are accustomed to see naked men and women.

The evidence of the exhibitions tends also to prove that, after domestic incident and rustic figures, our friends and the dogs and horses have the best chance of popularity. Cows also, and even that uninteresting animal, the sheep, find numerous admirers. Thus Landseer and Rosa Bonheur are really *popular* artists; whereas, if they had devoted themselves to the naked figure, like Etty, or to landscape, like Turner, they could not have been in this sense popular, there being no such phenomenon possible in the arts, as a popular artist with an unpopular subject. Landseer's art is enjoyed by a large class for its connection with their sports, and is valued by them just as they used to value colored sporting prints in the last generation; its noblest qualities being quite unappreciable by such persons. And Rosa Bonheur owed her immediate recognition in England *not* to her peculiar merits as an artist, which are of a kind not very popular here, but to the English love of horses.

The love of landscape is rarest and latest of all. It can only exist in a very advanced stage of civilization, when man has lost his first boyish interest in himself, and is beginning to look at the world about him. And the appreciation of landscape is only possible to persons who have habitually studied the noblest natural scenery, which persons are extremely rare, so that competent judges in this department of art are found in very small numbers. And landscapes are not the most saleable of artistic merchandise — in France they are scarcely to be got rid of at all, unless enlivened by the presence of animals; whilst in England they are even yet considered to belong to an inferior class of art, and an exhibition where they predominate is always spoken of as uninteresting by the news-

papers. At Liverpool, landscape painters are frankly informed that their works are not likely to find admittance, by the intelligible hint, "works of genre will be preferred." Landscape painters may reasonably desire an exhibition of their own; but there is one little drawback — it would never pay. The receipts of the different academic bodies would probably not be diminished at all, but perhaps even increased, by the entire exclusion of landscape from their walls; whilst an exhibition of landscapes alone would have no attraction for the general public, which would not visit it.

Nor do people pass suddenly from a state of repugnance to one of love and appreciation. The transition is extremely slow. They first tolerate landscape as a background to men or cattle, then gradually come to desire some degree of elaboration in it, and so imperceptibly arrive at that point where they can take some interest in common nature, though they will not as yet endure, and cannot comprehend, any thing noble in effect or unusual in arrangement. And it is a fact extremely discouraging to all true and original landscape painters, that even of those persons who like landscape, so few can endure any thing like originality in it, that original genius and a strong and direct hold on nature are great obstacles to immediate recognition in their art.

The question how far landscape painters ought to condescend to the taste of the public admits of a very brief reply. You continually find persons ignorant of natural aspects, who assert that painters have no right to represent effects which are to them unintelligible. It certainly may not always be prudent, from a monetary point of view, to paint such effects; and many of our artists resolutely deny themselves the pleasure of painting them, in order that they may sell their pictures easily and bring up their families decently. But the question of prudence is one thing, and the question of right another. So far from having no right to paint what is not intelligible to the vulgar, the artist is under a great moral obligation to do it boldly from time to time for the advancement of art, even

at heavy personal sacrifice. It is like uttering unpopular truth in literature. Writers who perceive truths which are offensive to their contemporaries are nevertheless bound to give them full and fearless utterance, even at the cost of personal reputation. For the noble human faculties which perceive truth were not given to us without a grave responsibility, and it is our bounden duty to declare the truth, whether we get fame for it or obloquy.

A very curious characteristic of human nature in its *naïf* and unconscious state is, that it always gets angry at things it cannot understand. When I see a thoroughly *naïf* man, and there are many such, approaching something of which I know his ignorance beforehand, I can predict with absolute certainty that the thing, whatever it may be, will put him more or less out of temper. For the sense of ignorance is humiliating, and therefore unpleasant, especially when it comes on one with a sudden shock. A truly educated man feels no anger at any fresh discovery of his own ignorance, but rather pleasure, if he sees an opportunity of learning something, because the educated mind is always conscious of infinite ignorance, and the sense of ignorance is therefore not strange to it, but habitual.

This has a great deal to do with the position of art and artists.

Naïf people are always irritated when truths of nature, of which they are ignorant, are illustrated in painting.

I remember meeting with a Parisian tourist in the Highlands, who was quite seriously vexed at some cloud shadows he saw on a mountain, because he could not make out what they were. Had he seen the same shadows in a picture, his irritation would have been directed against the artist, to whom he would certainly have denied all ability. However, as he happened to see the fact in nature and not in oil paint, he did not know what to be angry with, and so actually supposed the case of an imaginary artist that he might have the satisfaction of enunciating the following critical opinion: "Well, whatever

they are, no artist could have any business to paint them; they are not fit subjects for art, which ought to deal with what is intelligible in nature."

"What is intelligible in nature?" Exactly. But *intelligible to whom?* Those cloud shadows, represented in art, would be as intelligible to me as the shadow of a man against a wall. Here is the central point of the whole question. If we admit that art is to be intelligible, nothing is settled until we have also decided *to whom* it is to be made intelligible.

The fact is, that whenever any theorist tells us that the only proper province of art is the intelligible, he always means what is intelligible to *himself*, being angry at every thing that is above his capacity, and strongly disposed to abolish it if he could. Thus, people will often admit that Turner's effects may be true, and yet deny vehemently that he had any right to paint them, "as they were not fit subjects for art, because not intelligible to the spectator"—the word "spectator," of course, meaning the critic himself, as in these cases it always does.

In the formation of private collections, great attention ought always to be given to the *character* of the collection as a whole. Every collection ought to have a character of its own, and no work should be admitted into it which does not quite harmonize with that character. Nothing is more incongruous, nothing fatigues the eye more than great differences of *scale* in pictures hung in the same room; and there are different kinds of art, each good separately, which harm each other very seriously when seen together. In this respect the Vernon Gallery was any thing but a well-selected one. We ought all to be very thankful to Mr. Vernon for leaving it to us, and it is scarcely right to look a gift horse in the mouth; but I have rarely seen a collection which left so feeble an impression as a *whole*. Separately, the pictures are, many of them, of great excellence; but the *collection* is brought together without any attempt at unity; and the pictures help one another no more than odd volumes in a bookstall. The Sheepshanks' collection,

on the other hand, is more consistently chosen. Again, of national galleries, the Louvre is as badly ordered a collection as could well be imagined, there being no proportion whatever in the space allotted to different masters; it is a mere agglomeration, without any plan, in which the most precious things and the most worthless are stuck together like relics in some recent geological formation.

An *ideal* national collection would contain specimens of every great master who has lived on the earth; but it would necessarily limit the number of examples of each painter, which ought, in every case, to be the very finest procurable for money. The number, in my opinion, ought to be limited to twelve. In twelve examples, masterpieces, carefully selected so as to illustrate the strongest period of the artist's career, a very sufficient idea might be given of all but the most versatile of painters. Each painter ought to have a room to himself, with his name inscribed over the door, and on the walls within, in great legible golden letters, so that there might be no confusion in the minds of ordinary spectators as to whose work they were looking at. Under every picture there should be a detailed account of the intention of the picture, and its history (but no attempt at criticism or pointing out of "beauties"), engraved in legible characters on a tablet of marble as long as the frame of the picture, and on which the lower part of the frame should rest. Black marble would be the best, with the letters engraved and gilded. No catalogue whatever ought to be required, because it is wrong to put poor people to the expense of buying one. If, as is generally the case with painters, a portrait of the artist existed, there ought to be a marble bust of him, as truthful as possible, placed directly opposite the entrance with its back to the wall, and not above six feet from the floor, nor in the middle of the room, because that would impede the sight of his pictures.

Three or four copies of a brief biography of the painter should also be accessible in different parts of the room,

legibly printed and simply framed, with a glass for protection.

Every picture should be hung with its horizon on a level with the eye of a spectator of ordinary stature, and there should be a clear space of three feet at least between the larger pictures, and two feet between the smaller ones, which space should be filled up, if possible, with velvet of a dark maroon color. If a nation is too poor to show its pictures to the best advantage (as that poverty-stricken country, England, appears to be), a flock paper, with slight pattern and all of one color, is the next best thing to velvet.

It is not to be expected that a nation like Great Britain should be able to afford velvet for its picture galleries; but a private speculator, who has established a permanent exhibition of pictures at Paris, was cunning enough to cover all his walls with it from top to bottom before he hung a single picture upon them, a piece of extravagance which would astonish our House of Commons if carried out, as it ought to be, in our National Gallery.

Arrangements such as these would do more to facilitate the study of painting in galleries than any one would believe possible who had not been accustomed to pass whole days and weeks in looking at pictures. The fatigue of such study, if undertaken in earnest, must always be very great, but it is now needlessly increased by a total absence of consideration for the convenience of the student. It is at present impossible for any one to study seriously in any public gallery without tiring himself to death in seeking out works which ought never to have been separated, and straining his eyes, and stiffening his neck, in vain endeavors to see pictures which are purposely hung so high as to be out of sight. Galleries like the Louvre are an affair of mere vulgar national ostentation: there are great treasures in them, but no sign of any supposition on the part of their guardians that the treasures can be of any use. The great Rubenses in the long gallery are, it is true, hung *together*, but they are hung at least six feet too high, the

only earnest endeavor after perfect hanging and helpful association in the whole collection having been bestowed on the worst pictures in any public gallery in the world, — the hideous series of illustrations of the life of St. Bruno, by Eustache Lesueur. *These* were hung in uninterrupted order, but the priceless Titians are carelessly scattered amongst other men's works, high or low, according to the caprice of the director or the convenience of the hangers.

These defects have hitherto, I suppose, been almost inevitable in national collections, which are accumulated gradually by successive governments, depend largely on bequests, and are usually given over to the care of personages who have little knowledge of or interest in art. But such defects need spoil no private collection. The principle of giving a separate room to each artist may, in large houses, be carried out without inconvenience, and all the more easily if the owner has several houses. The practical difficulty of acting upon this principle is that ordinary rooms are often so badly lighted that pictures cannot be seen in them. A gallery may, therefore, be a necessary adjunct to houses which have been constructed without reference to the convenient study of art treasures. The best gallery, however, would be a suite of small rooms, all lighted from above, and of which each should be dedicated to a particular master, in the manner already suggested for national galleries. If the owner were fortunate enough to possess a few pictures of great size and importance, he ought to give a separate room to each of them with no other furniture than a large and comfortable sofa, placed at the right distance from the picture. An ordinary exhibition, where a thousand paintings are incessantly occupied in doing each other as much harm as they possibly can, is the perfect type of what a collection ought *not* to be.

The supreme merit of any collection is UNITY. Every picture ought to illustrate and help the rest. And if the buyer keeps in view some great leading purpose, the unity will most likely come of itself, but it cannot easily be reached otherwise. Mere miscellaneous buying, ac-

according to the caprice of the moment, leads to the raking together of unrelated objects, but not to that beautiful and helpful order, which multiplies a million-fold the value of every particle.

Having presumed that the reader really loves art, I need scarcely hint to him the desirableness of such arrangements as will allow his pictures to be seen. If he cares for them at all he will certainly hang them, so that he can see them. There is no better proof of the stony insensibility of many owners of pictures than their habit of hanging them where not a creature except the flies can ever hope to behold them. *Whenever two pictures are hung one above another, one of them is sure to be out of sight.* Pictures hung in ordinary rooms, which people inhabit regularly, should not be crowded up to the very ceiling like an exhibition, but rather carefully isolated and distributed all over the house, such pictures only being allowed to remain near each other as are naturally fitted to be companions. They ought also to be intellectually in harmony with the uses of the room. Illustrations of literature, and portraits of authors, have a greater value in libraries than in billiard rooms. I enjoy good landscapes so heartily myself that I am glad to meet with them anywhere, but they have a better chance of being seen in drawing-rooms than in dining-rooms. A landscape is half lost unless you can see its detail, which from your seat at table is often impossible in a large dining-room. But a portrait of life size loses nothing a few yards away. At the Manchester Exhibition of Art Treasures, Gainsborough's imperious beauty awed the crowd, with her scornful eye, twenty paces off. Nothing is nobler in a dining-room than a series of lordly portraits by Vandyke or Reynolds; but their successors of the present day have such terrible difficulties of costume to contend against that it would be a dangerous experiment to surround a scene of festivity with gentlemen in well-fitting waistcoats and highly varnished boots. And if you have any ugly portraits that you have an affection for, as is very likely, let them be placed in your most private

rooms, where no guests come. They are better there for many reasons. It is in our calmest hours that the dead come back to us in memory; it is then that we hear again their dear voices; it is then that we recall most vividly their half-forgotten looks and gestures. The ugly portrait may be precious to *us*, but it cannot touch the hearts of strangers. Alone, we may look up to it through brimming tears; but the world will not weep before it.

I think the prevalent idea that the purchasing of pictures is exclusively a luxury for very rich people who can afford *collections*, is unfortunate for the art. We all of us buy books, though very few of us can afford a library; why should we not all buy pictures too? The most of us pay pretty heavy wine-merchants' bills; and wine, though pleasant enough in its way, is no more essential than pictures. I see no other reason than this, — that we like wine better.

Every comfortable house ought to have three or four good pictures, at least *one* in each of its principal rooms; but such a picture as its owner would not weary of, or else he must have more. And all good pictures are inexhaustible: some by a mysterious charm and fascination, as the melancholy portrait in the Louvre, opposite the great Veronese, or the face of the Mona Lisa; some by their mighty poetry, as the *Téméraire* in the Turner Gallery; some by a wonderful ideal of beauty, as the *Phryne*; and some by fulness of matter and endless harmonies of color, as the best works of John Lewis.

But if we are to have as noble pictures in our houses as the merchants used to have at Venice, we ought to have as noble houses to put them in; not necessarily very big ones, — our own are generally quite large enough, — but houses glorious with fair architecture. There has been as much money spent on English country-seats as would have built three or four Venices, and yet there are very few of them that one could endure to paint; and such as are fit for pictorial treatment, are so rather by reason of mere quaint picturesqueness than any high architectural excellence; the corrupt and barbarous Elizabethan being the most effec-

tive domestic style we can boast. And in our treatment of such old buildings as we possess, we have almost all of us sinned against their builders, either by "modernizing" in the last century, or "restoring" (which means *destroying*) in this. I cannot tell what is to come in the future, — whether we are always to live contentedly in square boxes with oblong holes in them, as at present, or whether we shall inhabit worthier dwellings. For it is conceivable that human habitations might be erected which might stand alone in the fields, and not be utterly shamed by the contrast between nature's glory and their meanness; buildings whose marble walls might lift themselves against the blossoming trees, themselves variegated with hues not less exquisite; mansions whose sculptured portals might in some degree respond to the infinite sculpture of natural leaves and branches in the depths of their ancient woods.

When every house shall have good art which now has good literature, a good natural art will be provided to supply the want, — an art neither beyond the sympathies of our richer middle class, nor beyond its purse. That class will, of course, understand works of *genre* before it comes to understand landscape, but I do not despair, even for landscape; for it seems to me that people cannot be in the habit of travelling every autumn without eventually perceiving natural beauty, more or less, according to their capacity. And they will perceive, too, in the exhibitions, how nature is interpreted by art, and, in time, understand the symbols of the interpretation, so as to come to know what the painter is aiming at. Once this point reached, the walls of a hundred thousand houses will begin to glow with the preciousness of faithful art.

As death gradually removes the collectors one by one, they will naturally feel the desire common to all their order, *to keep their treasures together*. For the pictures when separate are the work of the artists who painted them; but their helpful association is the work of the collector alone, and a work requiring very high qualities of judgment and right feeling. Now no man likes the idea that his life's labor will be annihilated at his death; and

collectors find great bitterness in the thought that what they have so carefully associated will be dispersed as widely as ever when they are gone. And, if the public only has the sense to avail itself of this feeling in collectors of works of art, it may come to possess splendid galleries for the mere cost of the necessary buildings to keep them in.

An initiative only is wanted, and Manchester will give that. Every town in England of sufficient importance to have a lecture hall or a concert room is also large enough to have a free gallery. They may be deterred from this for some time by the impression that they cannot afford to fill such galleries with works of art, but this is a needless anxiety. The galleries would be filled in a hundred years by gifts and bequests, and until then it would be well to remember that pictures look none the worse for being well isolated; and that, if there were a few yards of space between them for the first twenty years, they would be seen all the better for it. Let the galleries only be *large* enough, so as to invite contributions, and the contributions will come; but, if our municipal bodies do with the provincial free galleries, what the Government has hitherto done with the National one, that is, discourage contribution to the utmost, of course they need not hope for very many contributors. The Vernon collection was first put into a dark cellar, and afterwards on the ground floor of an empty old house, where no picture could possibly be seen; next it was removed to a temporary structure at Kensington. The magnificent Turner bequest was treated with no more consideration; and therefore when Mr. Sheepshanks presented his gallery to the nation, the gift was accompanied by the condition, that it should have a building of its own. If the Government had erected a National Gallery twice as large as the Louvre, and invited private individuals to fill it, it would have been filled in a hundred years, and that most richly. All collectors, all living artists, should be encouraged to contribute pictures to the National Gallery, a responsible council having the power of declining unsuitable offers; and the nation would

thus obtain immense numbers of valuable works for the mere cost of the wall to hang them on.

If this book should fall into the hands of any one possessing sufficient local influence to determine the *form* of a provincial public gallery, let me entreat him to consider that a picture gallery is, after all, a place to see pictures in, and not architecture, and, therefore, that whatever architectural splendor is admissible, should of course be quite subordinate to the main object of showing the pictures. If you ask an architect for a design for a gallery, he will sacrifice three out of four of all the pictures you can ever hope to get together, to what he considers an imposing architectural effect. He will build you magnificent halls, when, in fact, a large weaving shed with the looms out would serve your purpose much better. I have seen extensive weaving sheds in the manufacturing districts, which, at very little cost, might have been turned into far better picture galleries than any palace in Europe. Let its roof-lights look to the north, and have common deal partitions to hang the pictures upon, and such a weaving shed would be an unrivalled gallery, such a gallery as there is not at this moment in any metropolis in the world. It would be far better than the Louvre with its lofty halls, and incomparably superior to our dingy National Gallery and Royal Academy with their dining-room proportions. The main cost of a really good picture gallery would always be in land, for a perfect gallery, where every picture would be on a level with the eye, and lighted from above, would of course occupy an immense area, but the site might be made to pay for itself, by having a structure of great length with plenty of street frontage, the ground floor and cellaring being let for shops and warehouses, provided, always, that an intermediate story of fire-proof empty brick chambers were constructed between the merchandise and the pictures. An incongruous idea, perhaps, you think, to put the wares below and the pictures above. On the contrary, quite a natural juxtaposition. Art is always based upon and supported by commercial prosperity, and the world's best masterpieces

would only be in their right place with stores of merchandise under them.

Picture galleries, whether public or private, are the simplest things in the world to build, yet nobody seems to know how to build them. The fact is, that the problem is so extremely simple and obvious, that learned and clever people will not condescend to pay any attention to it. The problem is merely this; to shelter a picture from the weather, and yet allow of its being seen. Well, since the invention of glass, where is the difficulty? I notice that for things people really care to show they manage much better. For instance, when a tradesman wants his advertisement to be read, he does not, if the print is small, paste it up on his third story, but wafers it to his glass window at a height of about five feet from the pavement of the street, so as to be level with the eyes of the passers-by. But our picture hanging generally seems to proceed on the supposition that lovers of art are endowed with wings, and can poise themselves before a picture near the ceiling of a lofty hall, like a bee contemplating a blossom.

XIII.

THE HOUSING OF NATIONAL ART TREASURES.

WHEN artistic questions come before parliament, it is usually in connection with public edifices or national pictures. On such occasions it is curious to observe how few members really take part in the discussion, how these few always reappear, and with what languid interest other honorable gentlemen listen to them or bear with them. Lovers of art ought to feel warmly grateful to the few representatives, who maintain, however they may differ among themselves, that Art is a matter of national concern, requiring, from time to time, the attention of the legislature. It might be desirable, perhaps, that these gentlemen should be more united in their views; but it is well known to all who study the fine arts that identity of opinion on that subject is hopeless, the only agreement that can be expected amongst lovers of art being that they all agree to love it in one way or other, though never exactly in the same way.

Much has been said about the liberality of England in purchasing jewels, and her parsimony in caskets. She has bought pictures and statues, but she will not, it is said, go to the expense of rooms to show them and keep them in. The delay in this, and it is only delay, is one which I have never felt disposed to regret, except so far as it affects our immediate enjoyment of the art treasures, and may tend to discourage gifts and bequests. But recent debates lead us to infer that this delay now approaches its inevitable term, and that next session proposals will be brought before parliament for the construction of a new National Gallery, or for the enlargement of the present one. A vote of £20,000, to purchase land behind the existing

building, was agreed to before the dissolution of parliament; but for a final decision on the subject we must now wait until next year.

There is a marked tendency in the English mind, especially in that peculiar manifestation of it which may be called the English parliamentary mind, to receive coldly any proposition based upon abstract ideas of *what ought to be*, whilst it readily entertains proposals for modifications and improvements in *what is*. English sentiment in this respect is very faithfully represented by the way in which country gentlemen usually set about improvements on their mansions and estates. They have a rooted dislike to comprehensive plans, necessitating sacrifices which are to be made all at once, and changes which admit of no transition. They make sacrifices which are in the end equally heavy, and changes which are equally revolutionary, but they set about it in the national manner, pulling down a gable here, building out a new room there, altering the roads and fences year by year till the ghosts of their fathers would not know the old places again if they revisited the moon's glimpses. This is probably due to some tenderness of sentiment. We get attached to places and things, even when we acknowledge them to be inconvenient. A total and sudden change, even for the better, leaves a void in the recesses of our hearts. Here is Mr. Cowper, for instance, who has got attached in some mysterious way to those plain and homely little rooms in Trafalgar Square, which we dignify by the proud title of a "National Gallery," and so pleads for their retention in the body of a new Palace of Art worthy of the nation. "It would be a clumsy thing," he says, "to pull down the present gallery entirely; a good architect would leave a great part of it standing, but transform it by additions into all that is desired. There would be a new *façade*, and a new building would be attached to the old building, which would be so altered and reconstructed that you would not know it again." Mr. Cowper cannot feel hurt at being compared to so respectable a class of men as country gentlemen. I therefore venture to observe that

this bit of economy is exactly that of a country gentleman making what he calls "alterations;" it is very respectable, and in the highest degree national, but it is not artistic, and it is not wise. It is *pottering*. And whatever has to be done about art should be done in a very different spirit.

Other members felt this as soon as they heard that there was a hankering for saving the beloved old rooms. Mr. Tite said, "It was quite idle to think of adapting the present building to the purposes of a National Gallery." Sir G. Bowyer, like an Israelite in Canaan, would pull the present building down utterly, and "let not one stone remain upon another." Mr. Locke "entirely concurred in the opinion that if any thing was to be done with the National Gallery, it ought to be pulled down altogether. As he understood the right honorable gentleman (Mr. Cowper), he was going to put a new face upon the National Gallery; but putting a new face upon a man did not alter his inside, nor did it produce any greater change in a building. Although a new face might be put upon the National Gallery, the old miserable rooms would remain within, and every disgrace and inconvenience which attached to the building would be perpetuated." Mr. Gregory hoped "that his right hon. friend would make it a *sine quâ non* that the new gallery should be built *de novo*, and that nothing should be taken from the present structure. No patchwork whatever could convert the present gallery into a creditable building worthy of the treasures it was to contain." Mr. Locke repeated that "if the new gallery were to be built in harmony with the old one it would be a dead failure. It would cost a great deal and satisfy no one." Sir J. Pakington "was anxious that there should be neither harmony nor resemblance between the present National Gallery and the proposed new building, which he trusted would be a complete design suited to the site and the object required."

It is highly satisfactory to know that a few energetic members of parliament are quite alive to the necessity for a grander way of treating this question than the Government seems inclined to venture upon. To retain the

present building, or any portion of it, within the new one would be a fatal error. It would ruin the design by compelling the new galleries to accommodate themselves to the bad ones we have already. The existing rooms are such as would naturally be constructed at an epoch when the nation was only just beginning, in a feeble, infantine way, to wish for a collection of pictures, but they are not such as a wealthy country like England ought to retain permanently even as a portion of its great art gallery. The Government hopes to save a little money by retaining these apartments, and it is the traditional policy of British Governments to pinch on artistic expenditure generally, because the mass of country constituents care nothing about art. Governments are not to be severely blamed for representing, in the way they order the expenditure of public money, the general feeling of the nation, however narrow or misguided it may be. If the nation were really anxious to have noble public buildings, Cabinets would seek popularity by erecting them. But it may be permitted to observe that on certain occasions it may become the duty and even the interest of the Government to make itself the representative of a small instructed class rather than of a large uninformed one. Our Government does so from time to time on various occasions; it has done so even in artistic matters, especially in the purchase of valuable pictures, most notably the magnificent Veronese. The country constituents would not, as a body, be inclined to think that a piece of old canvas could possibly be worth such a sum as fourteen thousand pounds; still the purchase was made, and very rightly, because the country constituents were not the best judges. I only wish that in the erection of a new building for the national pictures, something of the same boldness might be exercised. Mr. Cowper, with that timidity which is habitual to gentlemen in his position, tries to propitiate parliament by the assurance that the new gallery will only cost £100,000, Immediately afterwards we read that "the vote of £200,000, the proportion of the total sum of £703,000 required this year for the purchase of lands and houses for a site for the new

courts of Justice and offices, was agreed to." The courts of Justice are not likely to cost much less than a million, including the site, and one-tenth of that sum is proposed for the great national Palace of Art.

I am aware that the site of the new National Gallery is already partly supplied by the land occupied by the old one, and it fortunately happens that the remaining ground required is to be had on reasonable terms. Still, such a sum as £100,000 is evidently inadequate even for the erection of a fine building. Imagine, for example, what it would cost to reproduce the Louvre in London! I am far from desiring such a reproduction, for although the Louvre is altogether very grand, and in parts very beautiful (especially the old quadrangle and the colonnade), it is not by any means a perfect picture gallery; but I *do* say that England, considering her prodigious wealth, and her proud position amongst European nations, ought to have an art palace, in no way inferior to the Louvre in point of size and artistic magnificence, and very far superior to it in convenience and wise adaptation to the purposes for which it should be erected. What the Louvre has cost I hardly dare venture to estimate, the new buildings which join it to the Tuileries have swallowed up, I believe, more than two millions sterling; the old quadrangle could scarcely be erected in our day for less than a million. It is true that much of the new structure is used for other than artistic purposes, but we have said nothing about the long gallery. A more useful building might be had for less cost, but a building which should be at the same time a good gallery and an imposing work of architectural art could scarcely be completed for less than one million sterling, exclusively of the site.

Not that our gallery need be erected all at once. The best way would be to get first the land for the site, and a noble design, one specially suited to an art gallery, yet at the same time of palatial splendor, then pull down the present National Gallery entirely, as Sir George Bowyer would have it, leaving not one stone remaining upon another; after that begin to build a piece of the new

palace, large enough for our present wants, and let the plan be strictly followed, as future necessities arose. In the great Gothic times, "when men knew how to build," it never seems to have occurred to them that a cathedral must necessarily be finished before it was used, or that one generation was bound to end the labor. Only let the plan be worthy enough and magnificent enough, only *begin* it grandly, and posterity will be sure to carry it forward!

It is especially necessary that a National Gallery should be begun on the understanding that the design is too vast for one generation. National art collections are accumulative; no year passes without adding to their wealth. If it were known that the nation had a great building which was *intended to grow* with the collections, valuable bequests would be thereby much encouraged and would become much more frequent. Therefore, I say, let us begin a great Palace of Art of such vast design that to complete it will cost millions, but let us not think of completing it in our day, only of beginning it, and gradually going on with it as fresh space is wanted.

This would be the right spirit in which to enter on such a task. The present building is an excellent example of how a wrong and foolish spirit sets to work in such matters. It is thoroughly *bourgeois* from dome to pavement. A National Gallery was to be built at once, — that is in a year or two, — it must look rather imposing, and yet be economical. Pillars, it is well known, are imposing: there were royal pillars at Carlton House, no longer wanted, a capital opportunity for uniting economy with a certain degree of splendor, so the architect is told that he must make use of these particular pillars. The front was planned to fit these adjuncts, and the domes were added to give an august and Michelangelesque expression to the whole. We know the result, we know that for years such of us as have eyes and can see are weary of pillars and pediment, and utterly ashamed of the dome and her twin daughters. Even our good, honest English attachment to ugly things that we have been accustomed to will not reconcile us to *them*.

That edifice is now somewhere about thirty years old, and we are already talking about destroying it, or metamorphosing it so that nobody may know it again; for so heartily is the thing hated, that any one who ventures to talk of preserving it is at particular pains to impress it on our minds that we shall not recognize the object of our aversion in the disguise he proposes for it. And what did this condemned monstrosity cost? *It cost ninety-six thousand pounds.* And for four thousand more Mr. Cowper now tells us that he hopes to provide an edifice worthy of the nation! Well may he be anxious to destroy as little as possible of the existing building! Well may he reflect that all that brick-work, and lath, and plaster, and flooring, have cost money!

We cannot have a noble edifice for any such sum. We may get bare shelter for the pictures, and if we manage *very* cleverly, more cleverly than any nation ever yet *did* manage, we may so arrange our simple picture shed as to be able to see and study the works it will protect. That would be a great thing certainly, a result well worth the money asked for. But a great national edifice worthy of England for four thousand more than the Wilkins gallery cost is a delusion!

If the Government does not feel justified in voting more than a small sum, say £200,000, why not make an appeal to all lovers of art in England? Might we not all join, according to our means, in a great national subscription? If it is wrong to tax those who do not care for Art in order to build a palace they will never enjoy, let us who *do* care tax ourselves voluntarily. Might not the Royal Academy, as a body, give a handsome sum for so great a purpose? Might not our great collectors give the value of one or two pictures? Might not our successful artists give a month's earnings? And might not all these subscriptions be repeated, along with a new Government grant, as each generation built its *piece* of the great palace? That is how the great cathedrals were built: everybody gave something, generation after generation. It is true that they did it often from selfish reasons—to eat butter

in Lent, to escape hell, to obtain indulgences; but may not we, who profess to be enlightened lovers of the fine arts, spend for once, *together*, and for a great public purpose, instead of spending always singly for our own selfish ends?

Let us first imagine what a very simple but useful gallery, or picture shed, ought to be; and then after that let us indulge the dream of what a noble national Palace of Art ought to be.

No actually existing picture gallery comes so near to the plain practical ideal as that at South Kensington. You can see the pictures or most of them; the rooms are not too lofty, and the light, though not too glaring is abundant. There is no room in the Louvre so good, unless it be that new little one with the black doors, the first on your right hand as you pass from the Salon Carré down the long gallery. For, after all, the best gallery is that in which the pictures are best seen. The best thing, of whatever kind, is that which best answers the peculiar purpose of that particular sort of thing. For instance, the gallery at South Kensington, however unadorned, is a better gallery than those two new halls in the Louvre where the French School is lodged. Those rooms are most noble rooms; but they are so lofty that three-fourths of the pictures are lost in them by being hung, not too high to be *seen*, as objects, but too high to be *studied*, as pictures. I may be told that it is a good thing to have lofty halls for two reasons; first, because they are grander, architecturally, which is very true; and, secondly, because more people may breathe in them, which is also true. I may also be told, that although the hall may be lofty, there is no necessity for hanging pictures any higher than in a lower room. To these objections I answer, first, that the architectural qualities of the rooms must be made subservient to their fitness for their purpose, and that, as a matter of fact, low rooms may be, and often have been, beautiful in their own way: secondly, that although more people could breathe in lofty rooms, low ones would spread the visitors over three times the extent of flooring, and so neutralize the objection: thirdly, that to expect that all pictures in a crowded

collection will be hung low, when there are vast wall spaces above left quite unoccupied is futile, because the pictures must be put somewhere, and will be hung on that empty space, as the collection increases, whether out of sight or not. When you sacrifice a hundred masterpieces of painting to the architectural proportions of one hall, you are guilty of great waste. The whole Louvre, as a work of art, is not worth the tenth part of the treasures that are hidden in it by reason of its irrational construction, and if the whole of that palace were razed to the earth, and a plain cotton-spinning shed built on the site of it, and the pictures shown under the shed, on low screens of wood, or low brick walls, such as we enclose paddocks with, the collection would gain more by that change than it lost when the allies took away from it the spoils of Napoleon.

It is so difficult to speak on this subject with common patience, that I hardly dare trust myself on such ground at all. Such picture hanging as that in the Louvre seems to me to be not merely foolish or thoughtless, but so entirely irrational as to be the work of something below the level of humanity. No English word is strong enough to express stupidity of *that* calibre; but a French word will, namely, *bête*. To buy masterpieces, and then stick them up for hundreds of years where they cannot be seen is *bête*, because a picture is of no use if it is not seen. If a lad went to study Latin, and his tutor were to say to him, "You shall not hold your book where you can read it, but it shall be placed at such a distance from you as to be illegible," what would you think of that tutor? Would you not say he was crazy? Well, but picture hangers constantly *do* that. I being a student of art, go to the Louvre, and very much wish to see certain pictures, these pictures are hung so high as to be for purposes of study inaccessible to me; but I find the general public, which does not care to read the pictures, is perfectly contented to have them where they are; all it wants is to give one glance, be able henceforth to say it has "seen" them (a polite fib), and be off to its drive and its dinner. But ask some real student what *he* thinks of it!

In all practical matters unconnected with the fine arts the right kind of building is found and erected at once. Look at a great cotton-weaving shed; what a vast area! how well lighted! and yet one of the cheapest of constructions, when once you have the ground! Such a shed would be an *ideal* gallery; let it be provided with partitions or screens, and it would hold thousands of pictures! Some mention was made in parliament of a "quadrangle;" is a picture gallery to have a quadrangle because the colleges at Oxford have? It is a most wanton waste of space. All that space should be covered in. Staircases were mentioned also. What need of a staircase? Is the gallery to be necessarily two stories high? One *vast* ground floor is what is wanted. If you have two stories only one of them can be lighted from above. If, in addition to a shed for pictures, we can afford a palatial front towards the square, we should need staircases to get to the upper stories of our palace; but as we are planning a cheap gallery just now, to suit the proposed vote of £100,000, it is no use talking about staircases. The great thing is to resolve, first, that our gallery shall be immensely spacious, and so well arranged that every picture may be seen perfectly. A low shed will accomplish this; if we can afford a noble palace, by all means let us have one *between the shed and the square*. But what is most to be deprecated is a cheap attempt which tries to be both palace and gallery, and is neither the one nor the other, — a building where the pictures cannot all be seen, which leaves no room for expansion, and which in itself, with all its pretensions, is without importance as a piece of architecture.

I am quite aware that these notions will seem strange and heretical to persons accustomed to build from tradition. But I want us to be as independent of tradition in our gallery as we have been in most other things in which we have succeeded. Railway carriages are not constructed precisely like stage coaches; and is there any particular reason why picture galleries should be built like gentlemen's mansions?

When you go to a painter's studio and ask him to show

you a picture, he does not run upstairs with it and hang it out at the window of the third story and tell you to go out into the street and look up at it. No; he puts it on an easel, level with your eye, wheels the easel into the best light, and you really *see* the work. Now in a rationally contrived gallery you ought to be able to see *every* picture just as easily and comfortably as that. And if I and the others who think with me had our will about the National Gallery, every picture in it would be as accessible and as easily seen as if it were still on the easel in the studio of the master who painted it.

So that if the object were to have a cheap gallery I would first pull down the present building, and then, having bought a large space of land behind it, proceed to erect a vast shed, one story high, with a decent looking stone front towards the square, and plain brick walls behind. This shed I would have lighted from above over its whole extent; then, inside, I would build long low walls of partition so as to divide the shed into many corridor-like galleries. Small separate rooms would economize space still farther, and would have the advantage of isolating each master; but there is the practical objection that each room would require the constant presence of a guardian. *There should be only one line of pictures.* Each picture should be so hung that its own horizon line should be from five feet to five feet six inches from the floor. The walls should be covered with flock paper of a rich dark maroon color, showing a slight, just perceptible pattern, nearly in the same tint. (The paper in the present Turner Gallery is of too light and bright a red.) *Ample space should be left round every picture frame.* A good rule to make would be that every picture should have a margin of bare wall equivalent to half its own breadth. All this luxury of floor and wall space could scarcely be achieved in a thin line of building running round a quadrangle, whereas it might most easily be afforded in a great shed occupying the whole space. We might easily manage, if we really made it an object, *to hang every one of the national pictures on the line.* If a picture is not good enough to be hung on the

line, it is not good enough to be in the national collection. If we cannot afford to hang the present pictures all on the line, we had better stop purchasing and even sell part of our present collection till we *can* afford it. But it is nonsense to talk of England not being able to afford a few hundred yards of low brick wall. For the cost of some common governmental blunder or mishap, for one-tenth part of the cost of some useless and inglorious war, such a gallery might be built as would show perfectly and conveniently to art students every picture and drawing we possess, and leave ample space for the acquisitions of a coming half-century.

To recapitulate the requirements of a plain picture shed :—

1. It should be only one story high.
2. The whole area of its site should be entirely covered in, and not enclosed by a quadrangle.
3. This vast floor should be divided by low parallel walls into long corridors.
4. Every picture should be hung at that height which in the Royal Academy Exhibition is known as "the line."
5. The building should be perfectly fire-proof, the floor of tiles, the walls of brick, the roof of iron and glass.

But so great a nation as England ought farther to desire that its Gallery should be not only a convenient receptacle for works of art, but also, in itself, a noble work of art. The wealthiest of nations ought, on so fitting an occasion as this, to act with a grandeur becoming her prosperity. We ought to have, not merely a picture shed, but a great Palace of Art. We ought to erect something not only far more useful than the Louvre as a place for the exhibition of pictures, but even, if possible, more magnificent. We are perfectly aware of the extreme costliness of such a plan, but there are weighty reasons why this cost ought not to be begrudged.

A great deal of the effect of a picture, far more of it than most people imagine, is due to the objects which surround it. A fine picture is rather a climax or centre of splendor

than splendor in itself. There is an art of multiplying fourfold the apparent value of pictures at a cost which bears but slight proportion to the cost of the works themselves. An artist friend of mine, passing one day before the house of a well-known Parisian dealer, observed that one window had been cleared of everything but a solitary small picture. This was framed with extreme splendor and taste, and all round nothing was to be seen but rich pomegranate colored velvet. Aided thus, the picture (it was a masterpiece of color by Decamps) glowed exceedingly. So my friend went in and said to the dealer, "You have been taking particular pains about that Decamps; I suppose you want a high price." "Just so; I must have 40,000f. for it." Now, what that cunning tradesman did as a matter of business we ought to do for the national pictures from motives of a higher kind. This way of helping art by surrounding it well does not seem to be at all understood by persons in authority in England. Robert Browning, I imagine, would understand it, for he wrote about the murex dye, —

" Enough to furnish Solomon
Such hangings for his cedar house
That when, gold-robed, he took the throne
In that abyss of blue, the spouse
Might swear his presence shone
Most like the centre spike of gold
Which burns deep in the bluebell's womb."

Take the hangings away, and what becomes of Solomon?

The objection on the score of expense is frivolous. If you can afford to spend £14,000 on a Veronese and £9,000 on a Raphael, you can afford to surround each of them with a broad margin of good pomegranate velvet. And not only that, but you can afford a gallery for your paintings so finished that the eye of the spectator may rest upon nothing mean or poor as he approaches these precious masterpieces. It is not seemly that treasures which are of such immense value that money affords no means of estimating it should be housed in rooms meaner and more uncomfortable than the barest entrance halls to our great hotels. In

a National Gallery the pictures should be surrounded with every thing that may enhance their beauty and prove how much we value them. If the floor is of wood it should be an inlaid *parquet* of various and beautiful woods, the doors and fittings of the room should be at once massive and delicately wrought, like the superb ebony panelling of the Salon Carré. But as there is a grave objection to the employment of wood in picture galleries on the score of danger from fire, we should be very lavish of the finest marbles and metals. Minor decorative arts should be called into requisition everywhere, as freely as they have been in the new Houses of Parliament. Large pictures which cannot be seen near should be guarded by advancing enclosures of the most artistic *wrought* iron railing, full of the most quaint and graceful fancies, and the name of the artificer himself, *not of the firm which employed him*, should be legibly engraven on the work and on the marble pavement in which it was fixed. All the floors should be of marble or encaustic tiles, and the utmost variety of design should be everywhere encouraged, *no two doors alike, no two pieces of railing alike, no two floor patterns alike*. The doors should be of bronze with a bas-relief in every panel.

As a Palace of Art ought to have a magnificent front towards Trafalgar Square, the low picture shed (which I would always retain for its utility, however magnificently it might be finished), would not afford height enough to look grand from Charing Cross; therefore the whole site of the present building should be occupied by a very lofty edifice, four or five stories high, comprising, first, the ground floor, a vast entrance hall giving access to all the corridors in the picture shed, and furnished with the finest specimens of artistic furniture that could be collected; this hall should be hung with tapestry, and should contain, on tables, a collection of small works of art, such as statuettes, cameos, medallions, gems, &c. At each end of the hall a staircase should lead to the upper stories, where the drawings and prints belonging to the nation should be exhibited in frames, and under glass, like those in the Louvre.

At least two long corridors in the shed should be devoted

to sculpture. All the sculpture now in the British Museum should be housed there. It greatly diminishes the effect of our national art collections to keep them divided, and as the British Museum is in great want of space, it would be a charity to relieve it. We have now, on the whole, a fine collection of sculpture, though still a very incomplete one ; it cannot in its present situation expand farther, for it has already overflowed the building and occupied the colonnades outside. It is surprising that those who have influence in such matters should not be more eager to seize so excellent an opportunity for *uniting* our art collections, as this reconstruction of the National Gallery will offer. It is an opportunity that is not likely ever to occur again in our time. There appears to be an impression that sculpture, especially the Egyptian and Assyrian, is not so much of artistic as antiquarian and historical interest, so it is put in the British Museum, near the great national library. But the fact is, that no national gallery of art can be complete without a collection of sculpture, and also that the sculpture of Egypt and Nineveh, considered simply *as art*, is of the very greatest interest, and, in its own way, of most remarkable merit. The distinction between what ought to be put in the British Museum, and what in the National Gallery, is so easily made as to be self-evident. It makes itself. We have only to draw the line where *fine* art begins. All antiquities of the nature of fine art, and illustrating the history of fine art, should be placed in the National Gallery ; all antiquities having historical, but *not* artistic interest, should remain in the Museum.

As the study of art is very hard and tiring work, the comfort of visitors should be attended to. A desire was expressed in parliament that there should be comfortable seats. This is very right ; most visitors to the Louvre regret that capital ottoman which used to be before the great Veronese. But it is not well to put ottomans in the *middle* of rooms where pictures are exhibited : they often interfere with study. We wish to retire to a certain distance, and find the ottoman, with the crinolines upon it, in the way. It is better to fix seats near the wall on each

side. If the pictures were separated by broad clear spaces, a large easy chair might be put, with its back to the wall, under each of those empty spaces.

There can be no doubt as to the style of architecture which we ought to choose. The perpendicular Gothic was right for the new Houses of Parliament, because peculiarly national, and fit to receive a great heraldic record of the chiefs of the nation. But no style of Gothic has any historical connection with good painting, or with any sculpture in which real form has been developed. All the traditions of modern painting and sculpture are inseparably interwoven with the *renaissance* movement in architecture. No Goth could ever draw the figure. The real study of the figure was itself a *renaissance* movement. *Renaissance* architectural forms occur continually in the pictures and studies of the greatest masters, Gothic forms hardly ever. Our Art Palace should be of *renaissance* architecture. All-powerful associations settle this for us. That architecture alone will permit of a consistent commemoration of art history. The front of our Palace should be a great record. On inserted slabs of marble should be inscribed the names of great artists, in legible Roman characters, and the names also of great patrons and friends of art. In a hundred niches should be placed their statues. And large panels might be filled with imperishable tile paintings, or with works like De Triqueti's *Marmor Homericum*.

Proposals for a new palace in London are not likely to receive much consideration at a time when we have not yet quite recovered from certain feelings of disappointment and annoyance about the new Houses of Parliament. Much has been said against that building, both by people who hated architecture in general, and could not see the sense of spending so much "foolish money," and, on the other hand, by people who loved architecture, but did not love the perpendicular style. But the new Palace of Westminster is, on the whole, an effort of which we have many reasons to be proud. There was very much real grandeur in the idea, though Sir Charles Barry, like many men of talent, had power to plan a great work, but not invention

enough to carry it through with that inexhaustible variety and fertility of resource in matters of detail which is the privilege of genius alone. It is not equal to the works of the *great* Gothic times ; but I am not aware of any perpendicular architecture which is better. The objection to it is an objection to its style. Barry may have done wrong in choosing that style, but it was adapted to the habits of our workmen and the condition of our minor arts. Its enrichment is mechanical, but *we* are mechanical also. On the whole, we may accept the Houses of Parliament as the grandest achievement which in all likelihood could have been produced in the beginning of the Victorian age ; and so far from feeling ashamed of it, we have a right to congratulate ourselves that the legislature is housed with a grandeur befitting its great traditions. I have said elsewhere that the building was "a lamentable and costly example of mechanical enrichment," because I dislike that style ; but I applaud the resolution to have as grand a building as we could get in our age, and the willingness to incur the necessary sacrifices. Let us persevere in the same large spirit with advancing power ! Let us vote eagerly, as the old Florentines voted for their Campanile ! Let us eclipse the Louvre ! We are the richest nation in Europe : let us have the grandest art palace ; we are the most practical : let us have the best !

XIV.

F A M E.

A FRENCH gentleman whom I know very well had a daughter — she is now dead — who was distinguished as one of the most brilliant performers on the pianoforte in all France. Her father was rich, and belonged to that class of society which considers that its daughters cannot earn money in any way whatever without loss of caste, so the lady could not be a professional musician as she ought to have been, but was left to develop her wonderful talent for the delight of a few private friends. Such a position was essentially false. When Nature endows a human being with supreme musical genius, it is intended, not for the possessor alone, nor for any one circle of private friends, but for the human race. And the desire for publicity grew in the girl's mind as she rose to the heights of her art. It became necessary to give weekly musical soirées for the exhibition of her talent. After a while this no longer sufficed, and she performed in a few public concerts of the highest order. Some said that this was vanity, and not a ladylike tendency at all. But was it not the irresistible impulse of a true genius? Can a great instrumentalist be intended by Nature to perform for his own selfish pleasure? People are no more endowed with music that they may play to themselves than with tongues that they may talk to themselves. And when a nobleman of high rank, like the Marquis of Candia (commonly known as Mario), is gifted by nature with so admirable a natural instrument, we have all a kind of claim to the delight of it, as we have to the light of the stars. And though the instinctive thirst for fame may be often quenched by the coldness of high

caste, there is such an appetite, either active or dormant, in all intellects to which fame naturally belongs. A certain degree of fame is essential to the free exercise of certain forces within us, and where there is a constitutional indifference to it those forces have no existence. In the course of this chapter I shall show that the desire for widely spread celebrity, so commonly reproached against the artistic class as a weakness or a defect, is perfectly rational and right, and means no more than this, that all persons belonging to that class desire a field sufficiently ample for the free exercise of their especial functions — a feeling they have in common with many other classes

It is necessary, however, to draw a trenchant distinction between this right desire for fame, and the morbid or foolish longing for it on its own account. It is one thing to desire to be celebrated, that we may work with due effect, and another to desire only that we may be celebrated. But even the most diseased and degraded craving for notoriety is often the perversion of a true instinct unconscious of its own import.

Fame of very different degrees and very different orders is necessary to men in different situations. Men of the highest social rank are immensely famous without the least effort on their part; and yet as they are saved all that visible seeking after fame which characterizes artists of all kinds, they are never spoken of as celebrated, celebrity is so inevitable to them. We say of Landseer that he is a celebrated painter, but not of Victoria that she is a celebrated queen, because painters are for the most part obscure, whereas all monarchs are celebrated by the mere fact of their position. They cannot help being famous: their names are on every one's lips, whether they will or no. And they are famous for this very obvious reason, that a great glare and blaze of fame penetrating into every nook and cranny of their dominions is absolutely necessary to the most ordinary exercise of their function of sovereignty. I, therefore, take the fame of the monarch to begin with, as the most obvious instance of functional or necessary celebrity, the only celebrity in whatever

class which rational men desire; and I think that, in descending the social scale, I shall find no difficulty in demonstrating that the desire for fame, so far from being peculiar to the artistic class, is common to all men in their several spheres, each desiring that degree and order of renown which is suitable to his position, and necessary to his forceful and effectual life therein.

I find no order of fame so certain as that which is attached to a man's social position. The renown of monarchs is, of course, the best and most obvious example of this kind of celebrity, yet it is not confined to any royal or noble class, but belongs in minor degrees to all rich or locally influential men. The fame of rulers is necessarily co-extensive with the number of people they govern; and as the Emperor Napoleon is inevitably known to all Frenchmen, so also is the cotton manufacturer known to his hands, the landlord to his tenants, and the schoolmaster to his scholars. Men also become known to us when we have need of them; and those who from their occupation render occasional services to large numbers of people are of course known to large numbers. Thus, we find numerous classes of society, every member of which is inevitably famous, more or less, if he discharges the ordinary functions of his office. The governor is famous in the sphere of his government, and many laborers in the humblest occupations acquire a degree of celebrity which is not called celebrity, only because it is so intensely local, but which, if judged by the number of persons reached by it, is as great as the fame of many true poets and philosophers.

If we examine the social organization of any populous town, we shall find many persons there who live in the broad light of a local fame of a very intense and penetrating kind. Fifty miles off, their names are scarcely known; but in their own neighborhood they enjoy a well recognized and brightly focussed reputation. Like the brilliant chandelier of a ball-room, their glory shines with wonderful splendor on one well-packed crowd, but is prevented by opaque walls from reaching the outer world.

There is the principal land-owner first, who cannot help being locally famous, however modest and retiring his disposition ; there is next the most important clergyman, who is known to everybody in the place, and the smaller incumbents and curates, whose names are household words at a thousand tea-tables, where they supply an inexhaustible topic of conversation. There is also, probably, a banker, and there are sure to be one or two solicitors also known to everybody, though less talked about than the clergy. And the fame of the local surgeons is as certain as disease and death. And the principal tradesmen — the druggist, the tailor, the draper, the fashionable boot and shoe maker, the grocer, the butcher — are all absolutely necessary to the community, and well known to it both personally and by name. In a country town there is no obscurity, save for the poor. All rich proprietors, all prosperous tradesmen, are known to thousands ; and, as a general rule, you will not find these people shrinking from the degree of publicity which naturally belongs to their station. The land-owner will be a magistrate, and preside at public meetings ; the clergyman preaches, of course, in public every Sunday, and will speak also from the platform of the Literary Institute when called upon ; the attorney, however bashful by nature, will not shrink from the publicity incident to his profession ; and as for the tradesmen, they will print circulars and advertise. Of all these locally famous people not a soul perhaps cares about celebrity in itself ; but their several positions absolutely require some degree of it, or the whole business of the town would come to a standstill. And if you were to take the most retiring of townsmen and make an artist of him, whether poet, painter, or musician, the man would immediately desire a more extended recognition than his own little neighborhood could afford, for the simple reason that a community, which is large enough to keep a thriving grocer or a prosperous tailor, might be far too little to supply cultivated people in sufficient numbers to sustain a painter of pictures, or pay for successive editions of musical or poetical compositions. The desire for extensive fame, which

characterizes the artist class in our day, is, I believe, first of all the sense of a commercial necessity. Small populations afford no market for intellectual works, because the persons capable of appreciating such works are so extremely rare that they have to be sought out from amongst millions. But as the feelings and aims of the Florentine artists were local because they could find appreciation and remuneration enough in their own locality, so, I imagine, our own artists would generally content themselves with local recognition if such recognition could bring them, in wealth and honor, an adequate reward for their labors. The difference between a locally celebrated man—as, for instance, a popular clergyman—and a widely celebrated one—as, for instance, a poet—often consists only in this, that the persons whom the celebrity has reached are, in the one case, concentrated in a single parish or diocese; and, in the other, scattered very thinly over a kingdom. The difference of number is not likely to be on the side of the poet. For the persons who mentally receive the poet are of a very rare order, real readers of poetry being a very small and a very peculiar class; whereas the hearers of sermons are of all classes, and may be concentrated in great numbers in a single parish. The poet, however, is considered hungry after fame if he wishes his thoughts to be received by a few thousand persons, whereas the same natural desire on the part of a clergyman is called a “wish for an adequate sphere of usefulness.” The preacher will, in England at least, always find more hearers than the poet will find readers; but it is presumed in favor of the preacher that he utters his thought from a higher motive than the poet. Yet is it not quite possible that a poet may wish to raise men to higher views than were before attainable by them? and could any poet, with such a noble conception of his calling, feel himself justified in dedicating his whole life to it, unless he saw good reason for believing that his efforts would not altogether fail of their effect upon the world? When the clergyman flattens his manuscript sermon on the velvet pulpit-cushion, he is sure of his audi-

ence, and knows that he is fulfilling an undeniable function in the world. The artist enjoys no such satisfactory feeling until he is what men call famous. Until fame comes, the author does not feel sure of a single reader, nor even of a publisher. The written thought may never see the light. And the painter who is not famous is scarcely more sure of producing any effect on his fellow-creatures, for the public will not look at what he does, nor the hangers in the exhibitions put it where it can be seen. For these men to desire fame is therefore not more indicative of vanity or weakness in them than it would be in a clergyman to desire a church. An artist without reputation is like a pastor without a flock. Fame is the necessary condition for the due discharge of his function of artist. What the parish is to the parson, with its thousands of inhabitants, fame is to the poet or painter with the thousands of readers or spectators that it brings him.

Having devoted myself to an art which needs fame as one of the conditions of its satisfactory pursuit, I have, of course, thought a good deal about it. Personally, I can see nothing desirable in it, except the privilege it gives of choosing one's friends from the most cultivated class. As an artist, however, I look upon fame, or at least a considerable degree of reputation, as a thing to be won at the cost of any labor or sacrifice, except the sacrifice of private honor. And as a prudent general examines with his telescope a fortress as yet distant which he knows he will be compelled to take, so I have endeavored to ascertain what this Fame really is, and whether its outworks are quite so formidable as they look.

I have no concern except with the fame of artists. The fame of men of action, soldiers and discoverers, rests on very different grounds. Great actions partake in some degree of the undeniableness of money. In these things, however, it is achievement alone which tells, and this achievement is an affair of luck as much as capacity: for, though no man without very quick and ready wits ever succeeded in passing for a first-rate soldier, there are good reasons for supposing that the most celebrated are

not necessarily the best. The luck of escaping bullets has as much to do with military reputation as the courage to face them. If Wellington had been shot in his first Indian battle, we should never have heard of him, and it may easily have happened that still greater military geniuses than Wellington have met death and oblivion in a first campaign. And then there is the question of where a man may happen to be posted. I have no doubt that there were at least a score of officers in the English army before Sebastopol any one of whom, had he been commander-in-chief, would have earned immortal fame; but they were kept down in subordinate positions, and their talents were hidden in the trenches like glow-worms in the ditch. I do not envy men of action their chances of fame. No fame is so brilliant as theirs, but none is so precarious, none so dependent upon the merest accidents and the most uncontrollable conditions. The populace idolizes the successful general, and growls with unreasoning fury at the one who does not succeed. If Grouchy had been at Waterloo, and the Prussians stayed away, is it *quite* sure that the day would have been ours? By dint of extraordinary energy and genius, but aided also by Fortune, our hero won for us that great day. All I say is, what would the genius have been without the luck, and would the British public have worshipped Wellington as it does if the luck had gone against him? People wonder at the Great Duke's modesty: but no general not utterly spoiled by adulation could think of his success otherwise than modestly, recognizing, as every thinking man must, that, though great talents and courage are indeed necessary to the acquisition of military fame, unusually good luck is, at least, equally necessary; so that when people shout about the victor's car, they are extolling, not only Cæsar's faculties, but Cæsar's fortune.

The fame of writers and painters is much more within their own control. There are still the chances of disease or accident, but only such chances as all men equally share; they need not incur the hazards of the battle-field unless they voluntarily seek them. Nor is the accident of

position of such vital consequence to them as to soldiers. It is certainly a great advantage to a painter to exhibit his works on the line of the Academy ; but a good picture of sufficiently general interest to attract the public will find spectators outside of the Academy walls. It is also an advantage to an author to have money enough to publish his first book ; but it is easier to get a book out than to obtain the command of a great military expedition, — the only post where the highest qualities of generalship have a fair chance of displaying themselves. The sense that their talents have some chance of making their own way without any commission from constituted authorities is enough to console the workers in art for many inconveniences of their condition. It is also a wonderful stimulus to exertion to feel that our own ideas depend on ourselves alone for their expression. A good writer or painter can express his own genius much more easily than a good soldier, for the writer only needs a sheet of paper, and the painter a piece of canvas, whereas the soldier must have an army and a battle-field at a cost of millions. Poor inventors in the mechanical arts are also less fortunate than painters in this respect, when they can find no capitalist courageous enough to pay for the visible realization of their plans.

We have seen that a considerable fame may exist in a small geographical space, if we estimate fame by the numbers of persons whom it has reached ; whereas another kind of fame, not reaching in reality a greater number of persons, may be scattered over a whole kingdom. We may, therefore, consider fame as spreading over human society superficially, or penetrating it vertically. There is superficial fame affecting only the cultivated cream of mankind, and cubic fame with its foundations deep in the lowest ranks of the uneducated. A religious teacher, a military commander, a pugilist, or a rope-dancer, may derive satisfaction from the suffrages of the ignorant, because they afford for them the best proof of incontestable success ; but a great discoverer in natural science, or a great inventor in fine art, derives a more intense and com-

plete satisfaction from the testimony of a very few isolated individuals of high and peculiar culture than from the thoughtless applause of thousands. The great artist, the great mathematician, and the great naturalist, appeal always to the few; the great preacher, conqueror, fighter, or physical wonder, appeals to every human being with a soul to be saved or a body to be bayoneted or beaten. The fame of Joseph Smith the Mormonite prophet, Napoleon Bonaparte, and Tom Sayers, is *cubic*, and goes deep down into the most ignorant strata of society; the fame of Humboldt, Arago, and Turner, barely gets below the polish of the surface. The fame of personages connected with religious history, *whether the religion be false or true*, is sure to reach down to the most ignorant peasantry. The most unlettered fishermen in Italian bays have heard of innumerable saints; the idlest and poorest Turk has heard of Mahomet; the most ignorant Mormonite reveres the name of Joseph Smith. I mean no injury to the name of a good man called John Wesley, when I allude to his fame here as of the same nature essentially as that of a legendary saint or Mormon prophet; for all these celebrities, whether the result of personal worth, or mythic tradition, or pure imposture, are perpetuated and embalmed by the religious sentiment of the people, the strongest and most enduring of all the aids to fame. Nor must the English reader be angry with me for alluding to Joseph Smith as a famous religious founder. Hundreds of thousands believe in his name, and tens of millions have heard it. That colossal renown, based on an impudent forgery, already towers far above the fame of our greatest artists and men of science; and, firmly rooted in the ignorant masses of mankind, may last a thousand years with power unimpaired. Yes, that vulgar Mahomet of the West, with his gross, ungrammatical forgery, has secured such a place in the world's history as none but the founder of a creed can hope for. He has founded a great fame, deep in the safe rock of ignorance, and the bright waves of wit and culture shall shatter themselves for ages against its mighty walls in vain.

The fame of fighting men reaches the poor also. In this respect the Emperor Napoleon, the Duke of Wellington, Garibaldi the patriot, and Tom Sayers the pugilist, stand on the same footing. Their success appeals to the same popular and universal instinct. They have all fought and conquered. Now, to hear that one man has beaten another, or that one dog has torn another, or that one cock has killed another in the cockpit, gives to the great human combative instinct an intense and intelligible pleasure. Everybody can understand the fact of conquest; everybody feels a thrill of admiration for the conqueror. Therefore his fame reaches the poor. And if fame is to be great amongst *them*, its grounds must be intelligible. A great pugilist, or even a great rope-dancer, like Blondin for instance, may achieve popular fame, where a great scientific discoverer cannot; for if the "Staleybridge Infant" gets mauled, the people understand the mauling and admire the mauler; if Blondin runs along a rope suspended at a dizzy height, every laborer and brick-layer appreciates the feat; if Leotard leaps along swinging trapezes, every schoolboy can understand the marvellous agility displayed in his flying form. Haydon was jealous of Tom Thumb; but if Haydon instead of being a very bad painter had been the greatest artist that ever lived on earth, he would have shown great ignorance of human nature in being jealous of his tiny rival. The grounds of Titian's fame are appreciable only by one person in a hundred thousand; the grounds of Tom Thumb's fame are understood at a glance by every child. How immensely famous that wee thing is! Like a king born in the purple, he had notoriety for his birthright; and what so many big men toil for in vain, that little creature took without an effort.

And authors, then, how far down does *their* fame penetrate? We know something of its merely superficial extent. We know that Shakspeare's name has gone into many lands, but we rarely think how few people honor it in our own. One or two authors have reached the people, — Burns, for instance, in Ayrshire, and Tim Bobbin, in Lancashire; but Charles Dickens scarcely gets down be-

low the lower grade of the middle class; and Scott and Byron are totally unknown to the English peasantry. Of course, Tennyson and Thackeray are only known to the comparatively cultivated classes. The hard-handed tiller of the soil never heard of their names; even the pale factory operative, unless he frequent the Mechanics' Institute, is as yet untouched by the light of their celebrity. I have mentioned elsewhere that my servant Thursday, who is by birth a very creditable specimen of an English peasant, and the son of a gamekeeper on a great estate, had never heard of Sir Walter Scott;* nor have I any reason for believing that the great novelist's fame has ever yet penetrated Thursday's native valley. But the fame of Tom Sayers shines there in perfect splendor. The Mormon prophet is known there also. So, of course, are Bonaparte, and Wellington, and Wesley.

When we say that a poet is famous, we mean that he is known to the reading public; rather a small public in comparison to the human race. But with this small public even the best writers must content themselves. They cannot aspire to the universal fame of kings, generals, prophets, pugilists, and dwarfs. At this present hour the name of Tom Sayers is known to more Englishmen than the name of William Shakspeare.

Still the fame of artists whether in words, or sounds, or colors, is extensive and enduring in its way, surviving often a great many very noisy victories. Europe and Asia are full of battle-fields which the world remembers no more; but the masterpieces of literature lie open every day before a few true students, and the masterpieces of color-art receive the continual homage of admiration, murmuring everlastingly in their august presence, generation after generation.

* A more striking fact is that Scott is all but unknown to the *Highland* peasantry.

XV.

ART CRITICISM.

AMONGST the various items which go to make up a newspaper, we occasionally find a column or two of criticism on the Exhibitions. These criticisms are not, in general, very entertaining or attractive reading, and it may be questioned whether anybody ever reads them fairly through. They are looked over with some anxiety by the youngest artists, skimmed and dipped into by visitors to the Exhibitions, and skipped by the rest of the world. They are probably inserted from the feeling that literary notice of some sort is due to the acknowledged importance of the Fine Arts. On the whole, the periodical appearance of these contributions may be accepted by painters as a compliment to their profession. The present writer is by no means disposed to regret the existence, or deny the possible utility, of printed art criticism. It appears to him a natural and necessary product, growing inevitably in every country that possesses active artists and an abundant periodical literature. The object of this paper is not to weaken the influence of the true critic, but rather to strengthen and confirm it by attempting a definition of his functions.

But it may be doubted whether all who write on art, or even a large proportion of them, are qualified by previous study to form opinions whose publication is desirable. It would be interesting to have an authentic list of anonymous art critics, to know what are their usual avocations, and what proportion of their lives has been devoted to the study of art. Ferdinand de Lasteyrie tells us that fewer qualifications are required from Parisian art critics than from any other writers for the French press; that the

most inexperienced youths begin with the criticism of pictures, which is considered to require so small a stock of information, and so little judgment, that any raw boy may undertake it. Theatrical criticism is, however, in Paris, on quite a different footing, and editors take great care to employ qualified writers for that department. The cause of this difference is obvious. The Parisian public is itself a good judge of theatrical art, but no judge of pictorial; it therefore at once detects a pretender in theatrical criticism, whereas an ignorant critic of pictures may write on in perfect safety. The tendency of an advancing general culture is therefore to elevate the tone of printed criticism by excluding ignorant writers from the periodicals.

Many persons interested in the Fine Arts are beginning to feel that a great change must, before long, come over the tone of current art criticism; that the duties of the ordinary critic will be better understood and more worthily fulfilled, and that the relation between the critic and the artist on the one hand, and the critic and the public on the other, will become sounder and more serviceable than heretofore. The writer of these pages considers the present time opportune for an attempt to indicate what seem to be the most important functions of art criticism. The five volumes of *Modern Painters* have now been for some time before the world. The international picture exhibition of 1862 drew forth an immense mass of printed comment, and the present year has seen the birth of a *Quarterly Review* exclusively devoted to the Fine Arts.

The functions and duties of an art critic would appear to be very much as follows:—

1. *To utter unpopular truths.*—The reader may perhaps suspect me of putting this so prominently out of sheer perversity. But it is the first and most important of critical functions, the chief use of a critic being that he should announce truths which others do not yet perceive. There are but two things that a critic *can* state—a truth and a fallacy. Each of these, however, has two subdivisions as to its popularity; a truth may be popular or not, and so may a fallacy. The popular truth, being already sufficiently

expressed, has no need of the critic's advocacy ; fallacy of either kind he had better abstain from altogether ; so there is nothing left for him but the statement of unpopular truth, — rather an unpleasant and ill-requited duty, yet the chief duty which the art critic has to fulfil.

2. *To instruct the public in the theoretical knowledge of art.* — The work most needed is not as yet pure criticism, but art-teaching as preparatory to it. Art is a subject so deep and difficult, so infinitely subtle and complex, that it is only after the study of years that men even begin to comprehend it. But painting has also another characteristic peculiar to itself, and which places its teachers and practitioners in a position of singular delicacy. Other profound studies, as, for instance, chemistry or mathematics, are seen to be difficult by every one, and persons who have not studied them never labor under the illusion that they know all about them. But painting seems so simple, the object which it proposes to itself is apparently so obvious, that every one secretly believes himself competent to judge of it. The really informed teacher has therefore first to persuade his less informed readers that painting is not a simple matter, but a very deep and subtle compound of several sciences with poetry ; next, that they are themselves as yet more or less ignorant of painting ; and thirdly, that he, the critic, knows enough of the subject to be a trustworthy teacher and guide. Now, even if the critic can persuade his audience that painting is difficult of comprehension, he is accused of contempt for the public as soon as he implies his opinion that the public is generally ignorant of painting.* This is so far from being a just accusation, that some of the men whose genius we most revere, as for instance Byron, and Scott, and Wellington, knew nothing whatever of painting. Grown-up people, however, seldom like to be told that they are ignorant of any thing, and indeed it is superfluous rudeness to tell people of their ignorance when they are already quite aware of it.

* An accusation often brought against Mr. Ruskin.

Men devoted to pure science, as for instance mathematicians, are spared this unpleasant necessity, because no one who has never learned mathematics ever dreams of setting himself up as a judge of merit in mathematicians. But when people are ignorant of art, they are so usually to that degree that they are not even aware of their own ignorance. The most politic critic is, therefore, continually driven into the dilemma, either to hold his peace and so let error go uncontradicted, or else convince his pupil, by offensive demonstration, that he does not yet understand the subject. And when we consider that the writer on art addresses himself neither to the obedience of infancy nor the humility of the poor, but to men and women of mature age, already highly refined, often deeply and variously learned in other matters, generally belonging to the upper ranks of life, often very rich, and therefore likely to be very proud, highly susceptible, impatient of instruction, almost incapable of imagining that they have any thing yet to learn,—the practical difficulty of such teaching is clear. And even if, after making hosts of enemies by his frankness, an art teacher should at last succeed in persuading his readers that they cannot know what they have never learned, the difficulty of proving his own competence yet remains. In art criticism the most instructed teacher is continually liable to err. Painting includes positive science, but it also includes much more. Of its noblest powers the feeling of some finely organized human being is the only criterion; of Turner's dream-power, or Raphael's refinement, the soul is the only judge. And here is a question of deep and inborn affinity: we are not organized alike, and genius affects us variously. My impressions will seem wrong to you if I state them quite honestly, and so would yours to me. A critic, therefore, who ever quits the plain ground of easily ascertainable fact to attempt the higher criticism of feeling, is sure to awaken dissent. Rude and simple persons express this dissent with vehemence, and become personally hostile; intellectual men mark with curious interest the point of divergence, and calmly try to account for it. But both

henceforth regard the critic as a fallible person, whose teaching is to be either rejected altogether or received with thoughtful caution.

It may be asked when this educating function of the art critic is to cease. It is like asking when schoolmasters are to cease. Every day thousands of new human beings come into the world whose future social position will require them to pretend to appreciate pictures. Is this pretension to be a hollow make-belief, degrading to manliness, destructive to honesty, and thus vitally injurious to character? or is it to be the simple assertion of a well-founded right to a real opinion? If the latter, the theoretical art teacher — the “critic,” as he is yet called — has endless work before him. By means of books and articles in the reviews and newspapers, and, I think, still more by direct personal communication in the form of lectures, he will have to train the public in those eternal truths which are the beginning of criticism. He and his successors will have to repeat them over and over again so long as civilization shall endure.

3. *To defend true living artists against the malice of the ignorant.* — Every original painter, especially in landscape, has to pass through a period of contempt which it is in the power of any intelligent critic to shorten by demonstrating his fidelity to nature. This ought not to be an exceptional act of kindness on the critic's part; it is a simple duty which he is bound to perform whenever he sees the need of it. The most acute sufferings of men of genius are inflicted by the instinctive tendency of mankind to consider all originality a fair butt for ridicule. But little men are weak against a strong will, and one resolute voice will silence the silly laughter of whole multitudes.

A peculiar form of this duty is the defence of young artists whose powers are as yet imperfectly developed. It is certain that a young painter who sees and feels very intensely will try for too much, and spoil his pictures. The sort of injury to young men's work which comes of their good qualities ought, therefore, to be spoken of with the utmost indulgence, and even defended by the art critic.

Of course he must state the defects frankly, but at the same time he is bound to enforce the truth, too often forgotten, that certain rare and noble qualities, like swans, are repulsive at first, and only become beautiful as they approach maturity.

4. *To prevent false living artists from acquiring an influence injurious to the general interests of art.* — Some good-natured people think it very wrong and unkind in a critic to point out the defects of living men, and so reduce their incomes ; but as soon as a painter acquires any influence, his short-comings ought to be clearly, though not discourteously, stated. For example, a certain famous painter, whose services as an illustrator of interesting buildings were, before the invention of photographic printing, of quite inestimable value, has for some years exhibited a peculiar kind of cleverly tinted drawings in oil, of which he is the inventor. But a critic who should fail to point out the difference between these and real pictures would not be doing his duty. There is no necessity, either in this or any other such case, to speak of the artist with unkindness, or to vex and irritate him by sarcasm. It is merely necessary to demonstrate that his works, though exhibited as pictures, and therefore supposed to be works in color, are only tinted drawings executed in oil, with no attempt to render the variety of natural hues. After reading such a criticism, the spectator might still sufficiently admire these works on their own grounds, but he would be protected from an influence which might else have vitiated his sense of color, and so incapacitated him for the enjoyment of color in nature, and prevented him from rendering the honor which is due to genuine painters who really *do* work in color.

5. *To exalt the fame of dead artists whose example may be beneficial.* — It may frequently happen that some dead artist, whose name is not on everybody's lips, has nevertheless done certain things in such a supremely excellent way that attention ought from time to time to be directed to his works with reference to their especial quality. It requires some effort to remember very many names, and

so, out of pure indolence, the human race prefers to repeat incessantly half a dozen of the most famous, and ignore the rest absolutely. This is very convenient, for it enables us to gain credit for a knowledge of art without heavily burdening our memories, but it is neither instructive to the living nor just to the dead. There is no habit more degrading to the human intelligence than that of narrowing our powers of admiration to three or four sets of objects. We ought to admire all that is good, whoever did it, be he living or dead. True artists, thank God! have been and still are numerous, and from every true artist there is always something to be learned that no other can teach us so well.

6. *To weaken the fame of dead artists whose names have an injurious degree of authority.*— One of the most melancholy things in the world is the enormous power for evil of the dead over the living. There are dead foreigners who govern England in many ways with a tyranny that we should endure from no living one. Great artists, who, when alive, were probably far too liberal and large-minded to conceive it desirable that anybody should slavishly imitate them, are erected, when dead, into colossal obstacles in the road to original achievement. There is scarcely a single famous painter whose name has not been misused as a means for the repression of genius. The way in which great men are admired by little ones is so utterly childish and irrational that they pervert even originality itself into an argument against originality. Instead of saying, "Raphael was original, and you ought to be so too," they say, "Raphael was original, therefore you are to mimic him." They can conceive of no other sort of respect for genius than that which monkeys have for humanity.

There is, unfortunately, only one way of meeting this fallacy. It is useless to argue that when Raphael worked he had no idea of binding down all future painters to his particular manner. It is in vain to suggest that it would probably be rather unpleasant than not to a man of original genius to be copied for ever and ever by endless gener-

ations of mere imitators. It is idle to hope that persons devoid of originality can ever be brought so far to comprehend its nature as to perceive that the object of its intensest scorn is not another originality, which it always heartily respects, but precisely that slavish imitation by which people imagine that they are paying it an appropriate homage. So the only course left is to point out the failings of great men, and as every great man has plenty of them, there is much to be said in that way.

There is a vast critical movement in our age, the general object of which may be defined as the emancipation of the living intellect from the tyranny of the dead. Nothing whatever is safe from this movement. No sanctity of tradition will preserve the most revered writings from the severe scrutiny of this universal criticism. No dead historian will escape questioning as to the evidence for his events; no dead natural philosopher will pass conjecture for experiment, for the human race is advancing to ripe years, and no longer accepts as infallible the authorities that governed its infancy. Nor can famous artists, any more than famous writers and men of science, be henceforth the faultless gods they were. All their claims are to be sifted in a new and strange way, not by passionate partisans, but by calm clear heads that care for no man's name. Out of this ordeal many a white fame will come shrivelled, and frail, and black, like paper out of fire; but others will only be brightened by it afresh. And the benefit to the people will be, that they will no longer worship blindly, like savages, but admire intelligently like thinking men.

7. *To speak always with absolute sincerity.* — There is a certain kind of criticism, very knowing in tone, and light and jaunty in expression, which scarcely even pretends to a conviction of any kind whatever. Such criticism is almost invariably insincere. When men are quite in earnest they are never frivolous or flippant. Perhaps an insincere writer on art may often be rather shallow and careless than dishonest, and utter idle fallacies merely because nothing concerning art has acquired in his own mind the solidity and consistence of a truth. His main object is to produce

telling remarks about pictures, and say as many smart things as he can find a pretext for. The criticisms in some of the French newspapers are perfect masterpieces of this kind of writing. They have nothing to do with art teaching, for you may read them from year to year without learning any thing. They appear to be quite purposeless, and only leave a general impression on the reader's mind that the writer must be rather a sharp fellow. If these men were to say to themselves before writing, "I will say nothing but what I think, I will set down only my real opinions," they would be much embarrassed, because they don't think, and have no opinions.

Happily, men have an instinct which protects them from the influence of the insincere. One writer with a set of real convictions, be they truths or mistakes, has more power in the world than a hundred without an opinion. The influence of insincere art critics can therefore only be considerable in regions where no earnest one is active. They feel this so instinctively that when a true man appears, they always immediately combine against him, being afraid of him, as well they may. Any particularly sincere and earnest painter is also sure to be the object of their untiring animosity; but they laud false artists with a brotherly good-will.

8. *To give open expression to vicissitudes of opinion, not fearing the imputation of inconsistency.*— This, though put separately on account of its importance, is of course comprised in the simple duty of sincerity. A man who always says what he thinks, and whose opinions modify themselves continually, cannot always say the same thing. The opinions of men who think are always growing and changing, like living children. All honest and thoughtful men know this, and the sort of consistency which is merely the repetition of a formula is not, in their view, a thing to be respected. Such consistency is often to be attributed to simple stolidity, and still oftener perhaps to a very cunning sort of dishonesty. A dishonest writer thinks, before he commits any thing to print, "I must mind what I am about, and not say any thing contrary to what I have said

somewhere else ;” so instead of publishing his opinions of to-day, in other words, his only sincere opinions, he dishonestly twists them to make them fit in with opinions expressed perhaps years ago, and thereby gets respected for his precious consistency. A stupid man, on the other hand, is consistent from sheer inertness. He arrived at a conclusion some time ago, and finds it too disturbing and troublesome to look into the grounds of it now, wherefore he also is held to be wise. But a writer who is both honest and intelligent is perpetually reviewing his own conclusions, and asking himself candidly where he may have been mistaken ; and every time he feels convinced that he has been leading people wrong, he is simple enough to be in a hurry to tell them so ; on which the people, who have a violent admiration for consistency, and a proportionate contempt for the want of it, utterly scorn and despise him as an unsafe and uncertain guide that doesn't know his own mind, and cannot tell whither he is going. And indeed in this last particular they are very right ; for whosoever accepts Truth for his leader, and follows her faithfully, scarcely *can* tell whither she may lead him.

9. *To make himself as thoroughly informed as his time and opportunities will allow about every thing concerning the Fine Arts, whether directly or indirectly.* — Art is so vast that it is scarcely conceivable how any man can become a very profound judge of it, without devoting his *whole* time to it. But I have inserted the phrase, “as his time and opportunities will allow,” under the supposition that it might perhaps be possible for some writer of very extraordinary genius to acquire an extensive knowledge of art in the intervals of other and, to him, more important avocations. The only way to learn the rudiments of art criticism is to draw and paint the facts of nature, that is, to produce careful studies from nature, each with the especial object of recording faithfully some particular natural fact. Perhaps a thousand such studies might suffice for the acquisition of the elements of natural law. They ought to be executed in different materials, according to their especial purpose. But to become an accomplished

art critic it is also essential to make studies of pictures and drawings by different masters, not in the way of copying complete works, but rather studying parts of them, always with a definite object. It is unnecessary to indicate the immense range of literary culture essential to the art critic. The success of historical painting is not to be estimated by persons ignorant of history, nor can illustrations of poets be intelligible to spectators who never read verse. And there is this peculiarity about the position of every art critic, that his knowledge must embrace the knowledge, not of one artist only, but of thousands.

Nor can people who stay at home become art critics. No one can judge authoritatively of the representation of a class of scenery with which he is not familiar. The range of our landscape painters is extensive. They illustrate every kind of scenery in Europe, and of late years they penetrate into Egypt and Asia. The critic must follow them everywhere, taking memoranda of natural facts. He must also travel to see pictures. The critic of literature may find in London all the books he needs; but the productions of painters are not so easily accessible. The color of a picture *cannot* be reproduced. Hence nothing but the original handiwork of the painter himself is of the least use for reference. And to grasp the whole mind of a great artist we must see *all* his works, for every great artistic nature is so large that each picture is a new revelation of ranges of power before unknown to us.

10. *To enlarge his own powers of sympathy.* — How far this may be done by an effort of the will must depend on the nature of the man. But the elasticity and universality of his sympathy are amongst the noblest and rarest distinctions of the genuine critic. Painting is an expression of *human feeling*. Cold and unsympathetic temperaments, which are so often tempted to write criticism by the love of power, are therefore disqualified for it by their own constitution. A true critic feels *with* the artist, and is therefore strangely tolerant of the most opposite kinds of artistic expression; an unfeeling nature prides itself on remaining unmoved, and actually esteems its own callous-

ness a sort of superiority. An artist may be all the better for not being self-conscious, but a critic needs a highly sensitive self-consciousness to deliver him from that slavery to its own narrow personality which enthralls every simple mind.

11. *To resist the formation of prejudices.*—The Fine Arts naturally breed prejudice. Almost every painter is perfectly convinced that some process or color is abominable, merely because he is not master of it, or that some natural object or effect is unsuitable for artistic purposes, because he himself has no feeling for it. One painter tried to persuade me that cobalt is incompatible with harmony, and that it ought to be rejected from the color-box; and every color has some bitter and inveterate enemy amongst artists. There is hardly a painter who has not some crotchet which the experience of many others proves to be quite groundless, and the more we know of Art the less we feel disposed to pin our faith to the dicta of any single theorist or practitioner.

The explanation of this with regard to painters is that their personal experience, being intensely narrow and practical, naturally gives rise to strong convictions, which they have seldom enough of self-consciousness to attribute to their simple personal cause, and which they therefore express as if they were absolute, and not merely relative truths. Instead of saying, for instance, "I don't enjoy green," a painter will very likely tell you that "green is incompatible with fine color." Sometimes this takes the form of a violent animosity against some unoffending tree or plant. Englishmen often have a prejudice against poplars, and I met a Frenchman once who railed at chestnut-trees with an incredible acerbity.

Prejudices of this kind, however foolish and unfounded, are not of much consequence in painters, because if they have an antipathy to a certain color or tree, they only avoid it. But one or two such prejudices might vitiate the judgment of a critic, so as to make him unjust to whole classes of artists.

The artifices of pseudo-art criticism are so transparent

that it seems hardly worth while to indicate them; still, as they appear to impose upon some people even yet, they have a claim upon our attention.

To be a true art critic it is necessary, first, to be in possession of an enormous amount of information about Art and Nature such as very few persons have either time or industry to acquire. Of course we pre-suppose a natural talent or disposition for criticism, but that, without the information, only makes people talk; and when people talk about matters which they do not understand, they generally talk nonsense.

The pseudo art critic is a person who writes what is called criticism without being in possession of the preliminary information which is indispensable to the production of true criticism. His chief anxiety is to hide this deficiency from his readers, and to leave the impression on their minds that he knows all about the Fine Arts. This is easy or difficult in exact proportion to the cultivation of his audience.

A genuine art critic often confesses ignorance of particular truths; as, for instance, in criticizing a naked figure, if he does not understand anatomy he will probably tell you so with perfect frankness; or if he has not witnessed a storm at sea, yet has to criticise a shipwreck, he will begin by telling you that his opinion on the subject is not of much value, but that the remarks he ventures to offer may be taken for what they are worth. A pseudo critic *never* does this,* and whenever a critic pretends to know every thing, it is the surest sign that he knows nothing, that he has not even an idea of what it is to know any thing thoroughly. The pretence to universality in art criticism is sure to be hollow, because human life is not long enough for a man to become a universal art critic, if he studied for it ten hours a day, and never did any thing else.

The immediate object of a pseudo critic is to discover

* That is, up to the date of the present publication. When they have read this paper they will invent a new set of dodges, amongst which — who knows? — even modesty may find a place.

defects; that of a true one, to arrive at opinions. The false critic cannot, however, afford to point out the defects of painters already canonized, because, by so doing, he would oppose the popular opinion, which he always takes care to conciliate. There is this peculiarity about painting, that it is impossible to produce an absolutely true picture, because some truths must always be sacrificed to others. If, in a landscape, the relation of one shadow to its light is truly given, the rest of the picture must be either false or out of harmony with that shadow. Again, color has to be sacrificed to light, and form to color. A painter has always to purchase truths with falsities, as men buy bread with money; and this necessity being not in the least understood by the public generally, offers to the pseudo critic infinite opportunities for the exercise of his little art or trick of petty fault-finding. And not only that, but the extreme difficulty of painting exposes all painters, even the greatest, to genuine errors, which a noble critic notices only when absolutely necessary, but which the base one fastens upon instinctively, whenever he dare, to the neglect of every thing else; so that the whole tissue of his criticism like the talk of an ill-tempered woman, is tiresome and interminable fault-finding.

Then there is the safe old well-known critical trick of blaming a thing for not being something else. The aims of our English painters are, to their honor, so large and various that endless opportunities occur for the exercise of this ancient artifice. The wonder is, that there should exist people so simple as to be imposed upon by it; yet it still apparently answers, like many other cunning contrivances of our ancestors, which modern ingenuity strives vainly to supercede. Thus if I want to leave an impression that John Lewis and John Brett are not what they should be, I have only to suggest that Reynolds and Gainsborough did not paint in that manner, which of course is undeniable.

But an invention which modern times may fairly claim is the art of hinting that you could say a good deal against a picture if you felt inclined, but that the faults you vaguely

allude to are too obvious to require specification. This has great effect on people not very conversant with Art. Another form of it is to allude to classes of Art, whose merit and value you cannot quite safely deny, as if they were so very familiar as to have become stale and tiresome. There exists amongst artists a complete vocabulary of slang, the great convenience of which is that it enables you to talk knowingly about your superiors, and, without committing yourself to the expression of a single real opinion, affect to estimate lightly all that they have accomplished.

The one distinguishing quality of all valuable art criticism is *largeness*, — largeness of acquired information, to grasp the knowledge of so many thousands of artists, and largeness of natural sympathy, to enter into the individual feelings and affections of so great a multitude of minds. For to criticise adequately any artist's work, mere talent and honesty, though needful, are not enough. It is necessary to have learned what he has learned, and felt what he has felt.

XVI.

PROUDHON AS A WRITER ON ART.*

AMONGST all the discouraging facts about the public reception of the fine arts, there is not one so discouraging as the difficulty of finding out what people really think. The sameness of shallow profession that murmurs in our ears is a weariness to the soul. The orthodox in art, like the orthodox in some other matters, seem to find satisfaction in all acquiescence or verbal submission to their authority; they are pleased and contented when ignorance repeats, without either feeling or understanding, the consecrated formulæ; they are happy when any one says what *they* think, and irritated if he says what he thinks himself. It appears that many minds like echoes better than all the other sounds on earth, and willingly pass their lives in listening to nothing else. Nay, so wedded are they to this strange taste of theirs, that they *will* listen to nothing else.

To all such — and alas! they are many — this book of Proudhon's is not to be recommended. The sounds that come out of it are not repetitions but new voices, often flatly contradictory of our own, and of all others hitherto familiar in our ears. Proudhon was a very hard-headed, merciless disputant, far too sincere to be always pleasant, saying what he thought "in words like cannon-balls." One of his phrases, "*La propriété c'est le vol*," was more than a cannon-ball, it was a bomb-shell. It was not exactly true, but there was just enough truth in it to make it very terrible. The pages of his book on art are charged with smaller bombs that explode in our faces as we turn the leaves.

* "Du Principe de l'Art et de sa Destination Sociale," par P. J. Proudhon. Paris.

Proudhon was "let loose on this planet" for the purpose of awakening discussion on those fundamental postulates which society likes to take for granted. Nobody would ever discuss these, if some bold thinker did not from time to time attack them. In the realms of social philosophy, and we may now add of art also, Proudhon served the purpose of "Her Majesty's Opposition;" he was useful as resistance is to force. No force can be exercised without resistance, and, in intellectual matters, *real* resistance, such as Proudhon's, is very difficult to get. Ships that sail on water can go against the wind, because they have hold with their keels upon a resisting medium; but balloons, those ships of the upper air, are driven helplessly to leeward because no strong element withstands their flying cars. In common practical matters the resistance is supplied by material difficulties, and men may sail; in the intellectual region there is too often no such resistance, and they drift.

Before criticising these posthumous notes on art which Proudhon has left us, it is quite necessary, in order that we may understand them rightly, to comprehend the strange nature of the man.

If a great power evidently exists upon the earth, appearing in times and places far apart, and asserting itself victoriously as an influence strong enough to modify the existence of humanity, certain thinkers are satisfied that by the very fact of its wide and forcible action on mankind the power has a Divine authority, or is at least a natural product, and therefore to be examined respectfully. I am of this way of thinking, but Proudhon was not. Take, for example, the power of capital, and its exaction of tribute in the shape of interest. This power has not been created by the will of individuals, or the decision of governments; it grows everywhere naturally. Its strength may seem to us occasionally a temptation to certain forms of tyranny, which legislation has a right to guard us against, but we humbly recognize the power of capital as an institution of the Supreme wisdom, and therefore cannot disapprove of it any more than we can

disapprove of the natural collecting of water in lakes and seas. But Proudhon's mind was so constituted that he was capable of feeling the strongest moral disapproval concerning the central institutions of Nature. To hoard capital, in his view, was really a crime; and the exaction of interest, robbery. Nor did he maintain these views because he was poor, and envied the rich. He had opportunities of becoming richer, and refused to profit by them, from motives of conscience. Indeed, those English writers must have a very slight acquaintance with the private history of French republicans who believe them to have been actuated by a motive so easily explained as mere envy. They were enthusiasts who had a faith, and for that faith they gladly suffered poverty, exile, and imprisonment, when the abandonment of it would have given them ease, and often led them to much worldly prosperity.

This peculiarity of Proudhon's mind must be remembered when we read his criticism of art. Whatever offends his moral sense he vehemently opposes. Nothing is sacred for him but his own sense of what is right. There is a violence, a virulence, in his onslaughts which becomes most offensive if we lose sight for a moment of his peculiar point of view. But if we are irritated against him, it is evidence of a want of philosophy in ourselves. Proudhon wrote unreservedly what he thought; he might have abstained from writing, or he might have written what other people thought. It may be doubted whether he acted wisely in leaving for publication his ideas on art, a subject of which he had no special knowledge; but there cannot be a doubt that if we concede this, and leave him the choice between expressing his own opinions or other people's, it was his duty to us, his readers, to express his own.

He had no diffidence, nor deference. But these are feelings rather useful to warn us off literary ground than to guide us when we are on it, pen in hand. Men of strong convictions are always liable to the accusation of want of modesty. They say what they believe, as if they not only believed but knew it. Thorough belief has

within itself an assurance equivalent to that of perfect knowledge. If a man has this, his writings will convey the impression that he is conceited when he is only convinced. There is immense assurance in Proudhon's manner, but it is only the language of genuine earnestness. Writers who are never in earnest about any thing, have a great advantage over him in this respect; they can cultivate at leisure the amiable art of modesty.

The first proposition of Proudhon, which I should feel inclined to dispute, is the one on which he founds his position as an art critic, namely, the judicial competence of the uninformed spectator. The following paragraphs, translated and much condensed, contain the essentials of his argument* : —

"I know nothing by study or apprenticeship about painting, or sculpture, or music. I have always liked their productions as children like engravings. I am of that innumerable multitude which knows nothing of art, as to its execution, or of its secrets, which, far from swearing by a school, is incapable of appreciating manual skill, the difficulties overcome, the science of means and processes, but whose suffrage is the only one that artists aspire to, and for whom art creates. This multitude has the right to declare what it rejects or prefers, to signify its tastes, to impose its will upon artists. It may make mistakes, its tastes require to be awakened and exercised; but it is the supreme judge. It can say — and none may reply — 'I command; it is your business, artists, to obey. For if your art repels my inspiration; if it has the pretension to impose itself on my fancy instead of following it; if it dares to refuse my decisions; if, in a word, it is not made for me I despise it; with all its marvels I repudiate it.'

"Nature has made us, as to ideas and sentiments, about equally artists. As the progress of knowledge is slow, and requires studies and efforts, so æsthetic education is rapid. Authority in art is inadmissible. It is enough for any man to consult himself to be in a position to put forth a judgment on no matter what work of art. This is how I have constituted myself an art critic, and I recommend all my readers to do the same.

"I judge works of art by the taste for beautiful things which is natural to us, and especially by what I have learned in literature. I have no æsthetic intuition, and it is only by reflection and analysis that I arrive at the appreciation of the beautiful. But it seems to

* In all extracts from Proudhon, in the course of this paper, I have condensed whenever possible.

me that the faculties of taste and understanding are not so far distinct that one cannot supply the place of the other.

"My quality of judge established, I no not hesitate to produce my decisions."

The theory that ignorant persons may judge of art is so popular that Proudhon will carry the suffrages of most readers with him, and it is of little use to oppose him by argument, because his theory flatters the self-esteem of the public, whilst the contrary one wounds it. I by no means accuse Proudhon of uttering this doctrine *with a view* to flatter his readers, for he never condescended to any arts of that kind, but the doctrine is very agreeable to them. If you tell people that they are good judges of art they like you for it, and willingly listen; if you tell them that they are incompetent, and leave them to infer that you consider yourself competent, they become animated by less kindly sentiments towards you, and attribute your unacceptable doctrine to personal arrogance and conceit.

To judge of any picture, statue, drawing, or engraving, three distinct kinds of knowledge are needed. First, an accurate acquaintance with the natural facts which ought, in that particular subject, to have been represented; secondly, some considerable practical acquaintance with the means employed to represent the facts; thirdly, a philosophical comprehension of the intellectual or imaginative element in the work.

Take, for example, a simple pastoral subject, the picture of "Ploughing in the Nivernais," by Rosa Bonheur, in the Luxembourg. The facts to be known by any writer who would criticise that picture include the construction and movements of oxen, then (in a less degree in this instance because they are clothed) the construction and movements of men, after that the construction of trees and earth, with the peculiar forms which the earth takes when it comes off the mould-iron, as Woolner says, "wave lapping wave without a sound." The sky, too, must have been studied, and it would be no disadvantage if the writer knew something about ploughs, and had seen ploughing in the

country represented (the Nivernais), and were able himself to harness a yoke of oxen after the manner of the peasants in those parts, that he might know whether Rosa Bonheur had made no mistake in that matter. Then, as to color, though the critic cannot be a colorist, he must have made colored studies of oxen and ploughed land, or else he will have no notion of what the real color of them is. Lastly, as to the philosophy of art, he must know enough of that to be able to assign its due place to the work in the history of art, and to determine how far it is imaginative and poetical, or if only prosaic and observant, what sort of prose it is, and what separates it from other prose, such, for instance, as that of Courbet. Criticism is nothing else than the application of a set of tests, which tests are numerous and delicate in proportion to the information and feeling of the critic. These tests are not little rules easily learned, as some imagine, but results of elaborate knowledge of very various kinds. Now it *never* happens that a critic is in full possession of all the knowledge needed for just criticism; he has the means of applying one or two tests it may be, but these are not enough for the complete estimation of the work. What is called the public estimation of a work depends ultimately on the success with which it may have passed the successive ordeals of different tests applied by critics of various competence. The weakness of most art criticism lies in its ignorance of those scientific and technical facts which supply the only accurate tests. Common criticism is a mere expression of personal liking or aversion, and deserves very slight attention indeed. Proudhon would elevate this criticism by Ignorance to the rank of something serious that artists are bound to obey; that is he would have Ignorance dictate to Knowledge. It has done so to some extent, but to a much less extent than Proudhon imagined; and every year the authority of Ignorance diminishes. The public now knows the difference, in England at least, between a critic who has grounds for what he advances and a writer who expresses merely his personal fancy or caprice, and it desires nothing

so much as to find and follow competent guidance. The multitude is *not* the supreme judge. Its suffrage is *not* the only one that artists aspire to and for which art creates. True artists aspire to the judgment of those who are severally competent in the various specialities of criticism. When these have severally judged the work from their various points of view, a general conclusion as to its merit is drawn from the mass of their testimony, and this general conclusion, more or less modified by time, passes current always in the end. It is encouraging to remember the establishment of Turner's fame in spite of the popular verdict. He did *not* "obey" the multitude, he *had* "the pretension to impose himself on its fancy instead of following it;" he *did* "dare to refuse its decisions." The multitude "despised his art with all its marvels" and "repudiated it." And with what result? All the popular outcry and clamor were in vain, the few artists and connoisseurs who understood Turner silenced the thousands who could not comprehend him, and now, no thanks to any popular favor, his immortal name is engraven where they cannot efface it, high in the House of Fame. There is nothing in life more wonderful, more sublime, more cheering to our faith and hope, than the certain ultimate victory of *the few who know*.

Holding these views, believing that to produce art criticism of any value needs laborious preparation, it follows that I cannot allow to Proudhon, who was entirely ignorant of art, the title of art critic in any serious sense at all. And yet it seems well that he should have left us his impressions on the subject, because he wrote so very sincerely, and sincere writing about art, by thoughtful persons, is lamentably rare. Proudhon at least tells us what an ignorant thinker worked out in his own head, and in the course of his thinking by the sharp penetrating faculty of his mind, he got down to one or two obscure truths which are likely ere long to become widely known, at least to the more thoughtful class of readers. He was the first to announce in print the relation between some modern art and the new Positive Philosophy. He fished up *that* murex, and de-

serves great credit for it.* His faculty as an art philosopher was naturally large, but there is no evidence that he appreciated artistic performance. I mean that as a thinker he could grasp the historical relation of school to school, but as an observer I doubt whether he had that delicate insight which can justly compare picture with picture.

Proudhon's assertion that authority in art is inadmissible is not absolutely true, but an important truth lies hidden in the loose and too general phrase. Any pretension to universal authority in art is inadmissible, because no human being in the course of one life can acquire the knowledge necessary to a universal art critic. But, on the other hand, authority on special matters naturally asserts itself, and is always recognized so soon as the grounds of it are ascertained. In a cultivated age authority on particular subjects is allowed to all who can give evidence of superior knowledge on those especial subjects. What Proudhon rebelled against in his heart was the authority of superiority; but such rebellion is always vain, because nature herself instituted and ever sustains that just authority.

The place due to the Fine Arts amongst the occupations of men would naturally occupy a thinker who busied himself so incessantly with social questions. The following passages show how severely Proudhon regarded art and artists from his point of view as a social moralist.

“Whether painters represent drunken priests as Courbet does, or priests saying mass like Flandrin, or peasants, soldiers, horses, or trees, or effigies of antique personages of whom we know next to nothing, or heroes of novels, or fairies, angels, gods, products of fancy or superstition, — in what can all that seriously interest us? What good does it do to our government, our manners, our comfort, our progress? Does it become serious minds to concern themselves with these costly trifles? Have we time and money to spare? Certainly, we practical and sensible people, not initiated in the mysteries of art, have a right to ask this of artists, not to contradict them, but in order to be edified about what they think of themselves, and what they expect from us. Nobody, however, seems to have given a clear answer on these points.

* It may be permitted me to observe that I had an article on the Positive Philosophy of the Fine Arts in preparation, before the publication of Proudhon's book.

"Every two years,—formerly it was every year,—the government regales the public with a great exhibition of painting, statuary, &c. Industry never had such frequent exhibitions, and she has not had them nearly so long. In fact, it is an artists' fair—putting their products on sale, and waiting anxiously for buyers. For these exceptional solemnities the government appoints a jury to verify the works sent, and name the best. On the recommendation of this jury the government gives medals of gold and silver, decorations, honorable mentions, money rewards, pensions. There are, for distinguished artists, according to their recognized talents and their age, places at Rome, in the Academy, in the Senate. All these expenses are paid by us, the profane, like those of the army and the country roads. Nevertheless, it is probable that no one, either on the Jury, or in the Academy, or in the Senate, or at Rome, would be in a condition to justify this part of the budget by an intelligible definition of art and its function, either private or public. Why can't we leave artists to their own business, and not trouble ourselves about them more than we do about rope-dancers? Perhaps it would be the best way to find out exactly what they are worth.

"The more one reflects on this question of art and artists, the more one meets matter for astonishment. M. Ingres, a master painter, like M. Courbet, has become, by the sale of his works, rich and celebrated. It is evident that he, at any rate, has not merely worked for fancy's sake. Quite lately he has been admitted to the Senate as one of the great notables of the land. His fellow-townsmen at Montauban have voted him a golden crown. Here is painting, then, put on the same level as war, religion, science, and industry. But why has M. Ingres been considered the first amongst his peers? If you consult artists and writers about his value, most of them will tell you that he is the chief, much questioned, of a school fallen into discredit for the last thirty years, the classical school; that to this school has succeeded another, which in its turn, became the fashion, the romantic school, headed by Delacroix, who is just dead; that this one has given away, and is now partly replaced by the realist school, of which Courbet is the principal representative. So that upon the glory of Ingres, the venerable representative of classicism, are superposed two younger schools, two new generations of artists, as two or three new strata of earth are superposed on the animals contemporary with the last deluge. Why has the government chosen M. Ingres, an antediluvian, rather than Delacroix or Courbet? Is art an affair of archæology, or is it like politics which has always been horrified by new ideas and walked with its eyes turned backwards in history? If so, then the last comers in painting would be the worst. Then what is the good of encouragement and recompenses? Let things go their own way, unless we would follow the advice of Plato and Rousseau, and ostracise this 'world of art,' sod of parasites and corruption."

All this seems severe, but is very easily answered. Happily for the human race, it is guided in the right direction by its instincts before it has learned to account for its own doings by philosophical reasoning. Those who possess the instinct which either creates or appreciates works of art do not need to quiet their own consciences by any argument about the wisdom or utility of paying attention to the fine arts. The art faculty, like every other great faculty of our nature, carries within itself the assurance of its own lawfulness. If any argument is needed to satisfy those unfortunates who can only think and never feel, here is one, such as it is. Nature is always artistic, the very commonest things have artistic invention. A rose is beautiful and a toad is ugly, both are artistic. Now, so long as man's work is unartistic, it is a discord in the universe, hence artists serve the purpose of bringing man and his belongings into visible harmony with nature. If you answer, "What is the good of being brought into harmony with nature? we don't care about artistic qualities even in nature itself;" we can only say that art does not work exclusively for you, but that very many other persons find in it a sensible benefit and an addition to happiness. It is easily shown also that art adds to human knowledge, by giving it visibility and precision, but to do this the art itself must be conscientiously accurate, which until very lately it has seldom been. Indeed, the mission of art to humanity is only just begun, and it is less easy as yet to point to definite services rendered than it probably will be a few centuries hence. Even now, however, we owe to many deceased artists much interesting and often really valuable information. Such an institution as the English National Portrait Gallery is a proof of the utility of art as a record.

These questionings of Proudhon as to the utility of art are, however, rather introductory to his own answer than the real questionings of an inquirer who could give no answer, and believed that none could be given. Proudhon defines art as "*an idealist representation of nature and ourselves with a view to the physical and moral advance-*

ment (perfectionnement) of *our species*." This is one of the best definitions hitherto constructed. It includes natural truth, idealism, landscape art, figure design, and the influence of art as drawing attention to, and leading towards, the improvement of our physical and moral life. It misses, however, the affections and sentiments which cause the production of all art that touches us closely. Art is the expression of the artist's delight in what he sees or imagines, and an attempt to communicate the same delight to others, with a view to their sympathy and applause. Then Proudhon considers the æsthetic faculty one of secondary rank, merely an auxiliary in the development of humanity, rather a feminine than a virile faculty, and predestined to obedience. Here also he is undoubtedly right from the political or social point of view, which estimates faculties according to their direct governmental power. The æsthetic power influences only those who by their natural constitution are created the subjects of such influence; its weakness lies in the fact that it only governs those who are willing to be governed. Political power, on the other hand, governs also the unwilling. The difference between the two may be accurately estimated by the difference in national importance between the Royal Academy and the House of Commons. But, on the other hand, considered apart from the question of power over others, I am not sure that the æsthetic faculty, especially when in its highest form of artistic invention, can be considered a secondary or an unmasculine faculty. Be assured that to paint a great picture or write a great poem is manly work in the strongest sense. Shakspeare and Michael Angelo were certainly manly; and however firm our manhood, it is never too mighty for the great claims which the exigencies of noble art make upon it.

The wisdom of such governmental encouragement of art as Proudhon questions may indeed be doubted, but the course pursued by the Emperor in selecting Ingres for honors rather than Courbet, or even Delacroix, is marked by Louis Napoleon's usual tact and prudence. Ingres may be an "antediluvian," but his merits, such as they are,

have the advantage of universal recognition, whilst the merits of Delacroix and Courbet are strongly disputed. The great evil of all governmental recognition of contemporary art is that persons in authority can only honor "safe" men, and these are seldom the greatest, *never* the most original. Calcott was a safe man and got knighted; Turner was not a safe man, and thirty years ago, any official recognition of him would have excited much clamor, which would have caused the common people to doubt the judgment of their rulers. Besides, it does not follow that antediluvians should be necessarily worse than their successors; their only fault is to have aimed at qualities now no longer in fashion amongst artists; but these qualities may nevertheless be desirable, and to have aimed at them may have been to render permanent service to the arts, even though they are for the present temporarily lost sight of in the pursuit of more novel aims. As to the fitness of the *kind* of honor bestowed on Ingres there is still, however, room for doubt. The fine arts do not teach men how to govern a country; and the severe study of form, which is Ingres' *sole* claim to consideration, is not enough to make him vote wisely on such questions as will come before him in his senatorial capacity.

Proudhon's conception of art was large. He perceived the immense extension of the æsthetic faculty in man. He saw that not merely painting or sculpture, but every thing that aims at the adornment of life, springs from that faculty. The truth is, that whenever we decorate a building or a piece of joiners' work with the simplest moulding, whenever we enrich our dress with the least bit of braid or ribbon, or even put a wild flower in a button-hole, we are attempting to give satisfaction to the artistic instinct. A manufacturer at Oldham put a cornice round the top of his factory at a cost of £1,500. That was poor art, but it was an attempt at art, and sprang from the instinct which erected the frieze of the Parthenon. The duty of artists and writers on art is to guide this blind instinct to a rational activity. Thus we might suggest to a savage, that instead of carving and staining his own face, he would do better to

carve and stain wooden furniture; and it is the duty of every writer on art in the present age to tell the people who invent the prevalent fashions in female dress, that although the desire for becoming costume is a right instinct, the existing *mode* is a disease of it.

Proudhon's chapter on the Ideal is somewhat unsatisfactory. So far as I understand the Ideal, it is the typical or perfect form to which nature tends. But there may be various ideals; indeed, they are infinitely numerous. Nature never quite reaches them in any individual creature; but very clearly indicates them. Proudhon believed that there is Idealism in every thing, even in a photograph of raw butcher's meat, chopped in pieces. I confess I see no Ideal whatever in nature or in photography, but only hints giving us a clue to the Ideal. It is scarcely worth while, however, to discuss this point, on which there exists little difference of opinion amongst artists. The difference which *does* exist, and which distinguishes modern art from the antique, is that we recognize a greater quantity or variety of ideals than the ancients did. This is of importance, because it makes our aims more various and our judgments more liberal than theirs.

"For philosophers and *savants*," says Proudhon, "the mode of expression ought to be rigorously exact. Artistic expression, on the other hand, is augmentative or diminutive, laudatory or depreciatory. So that the slavery to the pure idea, which characterizes philosophy, science and industry, is just what destroys the æsthetic sentiment, the ideal, whilst artistic license gives birth to it.

"The object of art is *not* merely to make us admire beautiful things. The attainment of beauty is only the *début* of the artist. Our moral life consists of quite other things than this superficial and sterile contemplation. There are the variety of human actions and passions, prejudices, beliefs, conditions, castes, family, religion, domestic comedy, public tragedy, national epic, revolutions. All that is as much matter for art as for philosophy.

"Art is essentially concrete, particularist, and determinative."

All that is very true and good, one or two phrases are even deep and show unusual insight. The way in which Proudhon defines the change which the Fine Arts love to make in all their materials is very accurate. "Artistic

expression," he says, "is augmentative or diminutive, laudatory or depreciatory. His other assertion, that "the attainment of beauty is only the *début* of the artist," is more likely to be disputed. Beauty and pleasure are considered by many to be the end of art; truth the end of science; morality the end of philosophy; whereas Proudhon, being a seeker after truth, and a moralist, will have it that art also should seek after these things. I reserve the discussion of this point till we come to Proudhon's more elaborate development of his doctrine. The last sentence, "art is essentially concrete, particularist, and determinative," expresses a truth too often lost sight of by such critics as Proudhon himself, who forget that the particular truths and concrete forms of art can only be met by particular and, so to speak, concrete criticism. Vague abstractions, or even abstractions which, considered philosophically, are not vague, aid us little in our attempts to estimate productions which always come before us with definite forms. Philosophy, or at least the broad philosophical spirit, is a necessary element in good art criticism, but the knowledge of special facts is also indispensable to any one who would speak of an art which is "essentially concrete, particularist, and determinative."

Proudhon is less happy in a curious attempt he makes to distinguish the Ideal from the Idea.

"The Ideal is distinguished from the Idea, because the Idea is an abstract type, whilst the Ideal is the clothing given to the Idea by the imagination or sentiment. For example:—

"IDEA: It is safer to live in an humble condition than in a high one. *Ideal*: Fable of the oak and the reed, combat of the rats and the weasels, when the princes of the rat army, with their plumes, not being able to get into the holes, were all massacred.

"IDEA: Maternal tenderness. *Ideal*: a hen and her chickens; the pelican; opossums; a woman giving suck to her child; the lion at Florence."

This is *very* wide of the mark. Proudhon first gives an abstract moral notion, and calls that the Idea; then an artistic illustration of it in visible shape, and calls that the Ideal. Turning to Liddell and Scott for reference to a

Greek author who employed the word *ἰδέα* in something like its modern artistic sense, I find that "in the Platonic Philosophy the *ἰδέαι* were not only *εἶδη*, but something more, viz., the *perfect archetypes, models, or patterns* (Lat. *formæ*), of which, respectively, all created things were the imperfect *antitypes* or *representations*." The word *ἰδέα*, in art at least, does not mean a thought or a moral proposition, but a *form* seen in the mind. So far as a work of art realizes this inner vision it is ideal. Realism is the surrender to outward vision; idealism is the surrender to the inward vision. Proudhon's examples of ideals are not necessarily ideals at all; they might have been examples of servile realism. He confounds thought and ideality, just as our vulgar language continually confounds them. People say that they have ideas when they have only thoughts. By an extension of meaning which is metaphorical we talk also of musical ideas, because our language is not critically accurate enough to have a special word for that which the musician *hears* in his imagination. Proudhon's "ideas" are only thoughts, or moral notions; and his "ideals" only instances, or illustrations. But when Phidias imagined Jupiter, he saw in his mind a true artistic *idea*; and when he wrought the great image in ivory and gold, he made a work which, as an attempt to realize that idea, was, so far as he approached it, ideal.

Since Proudhon was before all things a moralist, seeking a definite moral utility in every thing, and approving every thing only just so far as it seemed to him helpful to moral progress, and since he by no means loved or understood art for itself, but only as a force or influence which might ameliorate men, it is evident that the principle of *art for art* must have been, in the highest degree, repugnant to him.

"*Art for Art*, as it has been called, not having its lawfulness in itself, and resting on nothing *is* nothing. It is a debauch of the heart and dissolution of the mind. Separated from right and duty, cultivated and sought after as the highest thought of the soul and the supreme manifestation of humanity, art, or the ideal, shorn of the best part of itself, reduced to nothing more than an excitement

of fancy and the senses, *is the principle of sin, the origin of all slavery, the poisoned source whence flow, according to the Bible, all the fornications and abominations of the earth.* From this point of view the pursuit of letters and of the arts has been so often marked by historians and moralists as the cause of the corruption of manners and the decadence of states; it is for the same reason that certain religions — Magism, Judaism, Protestantism — have excluded it from their temples. Art for art, I say, the verse for the verse, the style for the style, the form for the form, fancy for fancy; *all these vanities, which eat up an age like a disease, are vice in all its refinement, evil in its quintessence.* Carried into religion and morality, that is called mysticism, idealism, quietism, and romanticism: a contemplative disposition where the most subtle pride unites itself with the most profound impurity, and which all the true practical moralists have opposed with all their energy — Voltaire just as much as Bossuet."

This passage is so powerful, so full of conviction, so strongly colored with the little crystal of truth, which is dissolved and disseminated in so much hot water of fanaticism, that very many good people on reading it would succumb at once, and never dare to oppose to such stern and lofty morality the resistance of reason and common sense. Let us examine for one moment what the principle of Art for Art really is. It simply maintains that works of art, *as such*, are to be estimated purely by their artistic qualities, not by qualities lying outside of art.* For instance, the comparative poetical rank of Byron and Bowles is not to be settled by a comparison of their religion and morality,

* It is probable that if Proudhon were alive to answer me he would say that his objection refers less to the spirit in which works of art are *estimated* than to the spirit in which they are *produced*, that an artist who works for artistic ends alone is a lost being, whereas an artist who works for moral ends is always safe. Unfortunately for this view it happens that when art makes itself secondary to any moral or intellectual purpose, it almost always, as if of necessity, loses quality as art, and very frequently sinks so low (artistically speaking) as to get beneath the level of all that deserves the very name of art. The reader may remember Cruikshank's large painting against drunkenness; that was a painting with a praiseworthy moral purpose, but it was not a *picture* at all. (I have called it a "painting," because any piece of canvas covered with paint is entitled to that designation.) On the other hand I remember many pictures of drunken and immoral satyrs, by the great masters, which were not produced with that honorable wish to combat moral evil and help moral good which animated Cruikshank, and yet were truly *pictures*, and as such are rightly considered treasures, whilst Cruikshank's work is worth as much as the last teetotal lecture, and no more.

but of their art. Leslie used to say that he remembered a versifier who considered himself a better poet than Byron, because Byron's works often offended against morality, whereas his own were perfectly unexceptionable on that score. But amongst true critics, however desirable purity may appear to them, poetry is judged as poetry, painting as painting, music as music, art as art. So we say that naughty Alfred de Musset was a poet, because he wrought exquisite poetical work; and we say of good Mr. Tupper that he is no poet, because he has not those qualities of ear and intellect and imagination which are necessary to make one. If Mr. Tupper were very naughty, and poor Alfred de Musset a canonized saint in heaven, that would not in the least affect our estimate of them as artists. It is in vain to write Jeremiads against this. A painter who paints supremely well, however few or feeble the moral lessons he inculcates, is sure of applause and immortality. What moral lesson did Rubens teach? What sermonizing is there in Titian? Even their sacred subjects are merely treated as artistic *motives*, and how utterly worldly they both were, how fond of pomp and vanity, how full of the lust of the flesh, the desire of the eyes, and the pride of life! Yet they are the princes of art; and the preachings, and the teachings, the inculcated lessons, the elaborate allegories, the everlasting impertinences of inopportune counsel that fill our modern exhibitions will all be swept into deserved oblivion, whilst these great men remain.

When Proudhon says that "art for art has not its lawfulness in itself, and rests on nothing," he forgets that art rests upon nature, and that truth is essential to it. The two great artists whom I have just instanced as famous for purely artistic qualities were pre-eminent for their marvellous powers of observation, and memory, and vividly truthful imagination. They are great because they saw so much, and remembered so much, and because, when they imagined, they imagined with such astonishing veracity, and could so splendidly set forth outwardly on canvas what they had first seen inwardly. Art *has* its own lawfulness,

which is dual, namely, the law of natural appearances and the law of artistic exigencies, and both these laws are so vast and so complex that it takes half a lifetime to learn them. No wonder that writers like Proudhon, who practise and advocate the art criticism of pure ignorance should not even be conscious that these great laws exist.

And even in such technical matters as the laying of a touch, or the judgment with which glazing and impasto are employed, or the prudence of using light or dark grounds, or whether it is better to get light transparently *through* the colors or opaquely upon them, whether in water-color it is better to use the sponge or forego it, whether in etching it is wiser to obtain darks by depth of biting or by multiplicity of lines, all such questions as these depend for their solution on the one law that *the best method is always that which best renders the highest order of truth consistently with the permanence of the work*. So that even in the way we estimate the most purely technical qualities of handling there is an understood reference to nature. What we call *quality* in work is a very great thing, and implies very great knowledge and observation of nature. Quality does *not* rest on nothing. If a man can spread half a dozen square inches of canvas with oil paint in such a manner as to put what we call quality into it, that man has studied nature for years and years.

And again, when writers like Proudhon consider the art of painting as of itself mere dissoluteness of the mind, they wholly forget the severe discipline that is necessary to success in it. This mistake is especially frequent in men who, having only gone through the usual discipline of school education, consider the fine arts idleness. Latin and Greek are discipline, they *know*, but art is only "mental debauchery." If such men would try to learn to draw in good earnest, they would find out whether art is a discipline or not. Are these gentlemen aware that ignorance lower than theirs looks upon their own pursuits as they, in their ignorance, look upon the pursuits of artists? Peasants and field-laborers almost always consider mental labor pure idleness. You and I may find a difficult author very hard

work, but the ploughman over the hedge thinks we have a pleasant, idle time of it in our easy chairs.

Proudhon makes a good and valuable distinction between personal and impersonal work. The official articles in the *Moniteur* he gives as instances of impersonal work, Michelet's "History of the Revolution" as personal. Men of genius, who always have a strong personality, hate doing impersonal work; and instinctively select those occupations where their personality may exercise itself with effect. On the other hand, it is a decided advantage to men without special genius to follow what may be called more impersonal occupations; they shelter themselves behind the strong shield of custom or officialism. Fine Art never ought to do this; it should always be frankly personal; so ought most literature. Proudhon is right when he says that by his own personality the artist acts directly upon ours, that he has a power over us like that of the magnetizer over the magnetized, and that this power is stronger and stronger as the artist is more and more energetically idealist. To reduce this true doctrine to a concentrated expression, we may put it that the influence of an artist is in proportion to the energy of his ideality.

In a few short chapters, Proudhon rapidly outlines the history of art. Egyptian art, according to him, is altogether typical, aiming only at the fixing of types; Grecian art is the worship of form; Middle Age art is asceticism; the Renaissance was a rehabilitation of beauty, an ambiguous idealism; then the Reformation brought about the humanizing of art, by reducing it to seek its material in common life. Rembrandt, according to Proudhon, was the Luther of painting. Then came the French Revolution, with the great war of the classics and romantics; after that a long period of utter confusion and irrationality, out of which anarchy sprang at last the new school of *Realism*, which Proudhon regards as the final salvation and renovation of art, the principle which is ultimately to place it on a positive basis in perfect harmony with the rational spirit of modern intelligence.

It is especially interesting to find in this historical sum-

mary what Proudhon thought of that great and fruitful movement in art, the Renaissance. He considered it to have been a reaction against the asceticism of the middle ages, and then a development of Catholicism triumphant. The art of the Renaissance was the outward splendor and blossoming of the full-grown sovereign Papacy. Borrowing its means from Grecian art, it worked for the glorification of Papal Christianity. In this Proudhon sees nothing unnatural, Paganism had filtered into Christianity. "All religions have a common basis, and on the whole there is but one religion. What is made matter of reproach to Italian Christianity has happened more or less everywhere; every people has retained, in embracing the new religion, as much as possible of its old superstition. Northern asceticism never got down to Italy, which always remained more Pagan than the rest of Europe." Proudhon does not see much resemblance between the Venuses of ancient art and the Madonnas of the Renaissance; he is "in love" with the (female) saints of Raphael, but not with the antique goddesses. He has warmer sympathy with Gothic art, however, though "ascetic," and considers that it

"Asserted itself with as much power as its predecessors and more sublimity. The Renaissance remains inferior to it on the grounds of geniality, originality, and artistic idea, because in the immense majority of its productions it had for its object to ally together two most incompatible things — the spirituality of the Christian sentiment, and the ideality of Grecian figures. This mixture of Paganism and Christianity, besides being an inevitable reaction against Catholic asceticism, had its utility, if only to remind us of antiquity, reconnect the chain of the ages, form the artistic communion of the human race, and prepare us for the Revolution. But it was not the less an entirely secondary task.

"What characterizes the art and time of the Renaissance is the want of principles, or, if you prefer it, a tolerance incompatible with the ardor of a conviction. The Church Triumphant has entered into her repose and her glory; it seems as if the purifying times of suffering would never more return to her. Whether from quietism or indifference, she protects equally works frankly Pagan and mystical conceptions. A mixture of Paganism and spirituality, the art of the Renaissance, like that of the Greeks, arrived at the idolatrous worship of form."

At the conclusion of the chapter Proudhon strongly objects to the figures of Christ executed at the period of the Renaissance; he does not like them at all, likes M. Renan's Christ still less, and wants a revolutionary one of the temper of Danton and Mirabeau.

On the whole this is a rational and philosophical way to speak about the Renaissance. During our recent heat of reaction against that movement very many of us have lost sight of its true character. Modern Liberals ought to look back to the revival of classical literature, and the practical imitation of classic art which followed it, with feelings of especial and peculiar gratitude. It is to that movement that we all owe our modern intellectual emancipation. This is proved by the ardent hostility with which the enemies of modernism assail the Renaissance, and by their untiring endeavors to bring it into general discredit. It is true that the Renaissance led to a period of license in manners; its palaces were not houses of purity, nor its great luxury without sin; but it seems unhappily inevitable that every successive effort towards intellectual emancipation should be followed by temporary licentiousness of life. If this is really inevitable, it is to be regretted; but the mind of humanity must and will advance in spite of these occasional disturbances of moral equilibrium. There are signs even now of something of this kind preparing itself for us, a new intellectual movement which is likely to be accompanied by some relaxation in conduct. What is certain is that without the Renaissance and the secular studies which it fostered, modern science and modern art would have been still unknown to us, and Europe would have stiffened into a Gothic China or Japan.

But the Renaissance, in turning towards the literature and art of the ancients, fell into empty idealism, an idealism of externals. The art of the great time of the Renaissance had little apparent connection with the actual life of the age it flourished in. Proudhon quotes a saying, attributed to Raphael, that the business of art is not to represent things as nature makes them, but as she ought to make them; and Proudhon attributes the curious mix-

ture of Catholicism and Pagan mythology which distinguishes the art of the Renaissance to this spirit of idealism, which was also the cause, in his opinion, of the moral corruption which immediately followed that movement.

The effect of the Reformation upon art was to make it condescend to illustrate the actual life of its own time. It resisted the new Paganism into which art had thrown itself, and drove artists to paint what they saw by closing the fields of idolatry and idealism. The title of Proudhon's chapter on this subject explains his view in one word, "*La Réforme; l'art s'humanise.*" The art of the Renaissance may have been Divine, but it would not condescend to be human; aiming at what its professors thought God ought to have done, it failed to perceive the qualities of what he *had* done. Hence Proudhon gives a far higher place to Rembrandt than to Raphaël, puts Rembrandt and Luther together, and Shakspeare along with them in a trinity of reformers. What he likes in Shakspeare is not so much his idealism as his true sympathy with common life and clear understanding of it. Proudhon regrets very much that France did not join this movement, and by no means approves that tiresome pedantry which even down to our own day has led Frenchmen to ape the ancients.

The war of the classics and romantics is not unfairly described by Proudhon. The following passages contain, I believe, all that is most valuable in the argument of each party:—

"The romantics reproached the established tradition with two things: the first with setting aside fifteen centuries of history, whence the narrowness of its thought, and the want of life and originality and truth in its works; the second with not even understanding its models, and being thereby thrown into endless contradictions. Is the history of Christendom nothing? said they. Is it not as much matter for poetry as the Pagan mythology and wars? And if it is artistic material, why are we to confine ourselves to the limits of your classics? And then with your worship of classic form, which is your ideal, you sacrifice *expression* which is not less important, and so fall into conventionalism and monotony. The ancients carved their calm gods because they believed in them; we, who seek action and life, common labors and civic duties, cannot accept them as models.

“The classics argued that art is absolute, universal, and eternal; that its rules, which are the laws of the beautiful, are, like the rules of logic and geometry, immutable; that the ancients practised them because they understood them, and hence left us incomparable works; that there is only one and the same art in which nations more or less succeed; that the revolutions of history do not necessitate revolutions in literature and art, as the *Renaissance* artists proved; that to abandon a tradition, consecrated by so many masterpieces, would be to retrograde, and substitute the worship of the common-place for the worship of form; finally, that if the new school thought it could excel the old, it had better try, and would then be judged by its performance.”

This last challenge, as Proudhon remarks, it was dangerous to accept. Old systems which have produced their full quantity of fruit always contemptuously invite young systems to show theirs; and when there is little or none to show, they would have it believed that the immature system is permanently unproductive. The *Renaissance* had produced its fruit; romanticism was only just beginning to produce, so that any comparison on such ground was unfair. In these days we all see that romanticism was less a system than an emancipation, and that its greatest service is to have opened the way to the universality of modern naturalism. Classicism was a theory of limitation and restraint; romanticism a deliverance from this; naturalism is a boundless study of human life and the external world. Traces of the two first linger yet in art, and some elderly men on the rare occasions when those once mighty watch-words are pronounced in these days, may even still feel a lingering ardor of partisanship, such as that great controversy kindled in their youth; but for the coming generation that war will be as much matter of history as the Wars of the Roses.

The part of Proudhon's book which will be read with most interest is that extending from the tenth chapter to the conclusion. The first nine chapters are full of principles and doctrines, of which I have just given an abridged statement; but in the tenth Proudhon enters on the direct discussion of the merits of modern painters. His first care is to define the two chief elements of every work of

art, reason and taste, and to affirm that criticism ought to possess these two qualities to be able to meet and measure them duly. In the word "reason," Proudhon understands both sciences and morality; what he calls "taste" includes every thing that is to be measured by the æsthetic faculty. I doubt whether he realized the full importance of the sciences which treat of natural *aspects*; he was certainly under the impression that a man might write art criticism without them. And I doubt, farther, whether Proudhon rightly saw the limits of taste; probably he included under that head much that belongs to the higher faculty of invention, and to the more common gift of simple observation. However, taking the two words in his sense, we are to understand that in his criticism he insists always on the moral and rational side of art, and presents more reservedly his æsthetic judgments, which, he feels, may be simply personal. This is the way he himself puts it; a barer statement would be that he does not judge art as an art critic at all, but as a reasoner and moralist.

Proudhon is very angry with Eugène Delacroix because that painter had the misfortune to aim at the rendering of his own personal impressions, and to say so. This is resented as the height of artistic presumption. An artist, according to Proudhon, is not to render his own impressions, but those of the public — those of P. J. Proudhon in particular, as one of the public. The artist is to embody, not his own ideas, but the collective ideas of his time.

This is one of those pleasing theories which the vulgar are always so ready to accept. They like to flatter themselves that men of genius, after all, are not their teachers, but their servants and interpreters. "It is we," they delight to believe, "who have great ideas; the business of artists is to embody our conceptions, as the business of writers is to register our opinions." It is true that much writing and painting attempts only this, and succeeds; but it is also certain that great men aim at something more than this. Delacroix certainly did, and so far gave evidence of greatness. Not that his art seems to me really

grand and noble ; it is too agitated, too feverish, too full of morbid and false energy. Even his color, which it is the fashion to admire, is generally violent and crude, and his composition often singularly awkward. With better health, and less irritability of nerve, he might have been a great artist, but he had not the calm of a mighty painter. Proudhon objects that he painted a great variety of subjects which he, Proudhon, does not care about, and then asks, "Comprend-il mon idée, sent-il mon idéal, saisit-il mon impression, à moi profane, qu'il s'agit surtout d'intéresser, d'émouvoir, et dont on sollicite le suffrage?" The objection to this style of criticism is that it attributes far too much importance to the personal predilections of the critic. What do we care about Proudhon's "*idéal*" when we are studying Delacroix? For any critic to say that a painter is irrational merely because he does not realize his, the critic's, own impressions is a monstrous impertinence.

Proudhon is severe on Ingres for his "stupid" work. The truth is that Ingres is wholly unintellectual. Long labor, and a narrow obstinacy, have given him unusual skill in drawing the muscles (which, nevertheless, as in the picture of St. Symphorien in the Cathedral of Autun, he often violently exaggerates), but no painter of great fame is so mindless. I have not seen his "*Vierge à la Communion*," but am fully disposed to believe all that Proudhon says against it as a pretty young girl *posing* charmingly, whereas it is evident that when Mary took her first sacrament, it being after the death of Jesus, she must have been at least fifty years old, and, having borne great sorrow, could scarcely have retained that early charm which grief and time so certainly wear away. I have not seen this picture, but I remember the Virgin in the same painter's "*Jesus disputing with the Doctors*," a face without character and without emotion, like the visage of a Baker Street wax-work ; and I remember the central figure, the boy Jesus, a conception so commonplace that any religious printseller will offer you a hundred such. The high-water mark of Ingres's art was reached in the *Source*,

where all his fine knowledge of form was called for, and not one ray of intelligence.

There is an elaborate criticism of Léopold Robert. His pictures of Italian peasants have long been very popular in France, where they are rendered familiar by engravings. They have a great charm, an infinite grace of composition and delicate sense of beauty. No artist ever more admirably rendered the harmony of moving forms. His groups are arranged with such consummate art, that no limb, however joyously active, violates the profound accord. Hence we yield to these works as we yield to beautiful music; they are the music of forms in motion. We are filled with a deep satisfaction, and are glad that an order so exquisite should thus be arrested for ever. For in the actual world of men, beautiful groupings like these are scarcely seen ere they shatter, but in the works of a painter like Léopold Robert the elastic limbs hold themselves unweariedly, and the fair forms bind themselves together in a permanent edifice of grace.

Whether Italian peasants ever *do* arrange themselves so felicitously, whether their limbs are so delicately moulded and their faces so ideally beautiful, I cannot undertake to affirm. Proudhon utterly disbelieves these pictures. There is not corn enough on the cart, he says, for a real harvest, nor any genuine rustic life in these peasants of a painter's dreamland. Very possibly Proudhon is right. Léopold Robert may have pursued an ideal, which, so far as actual rustic life is concerned, must be pronounced false in its superlative refinement. Yet though his gift may have been injudiciously employed, it was a great gift and a rare one, and art can achieve no perfect work without it.

Proudhon considers Horace Vernet as irrational as Ingres and Delacroix. "*Sottise et impuissance, je n'ai pas d'autres termes pour caractériser de pareils ouvrages.*" Such is the verdict on Vernet's works in general. Descending to particulars, we have a lively expression of dislike. Speaking of that prodigious canvas *La Smala*, our critic uses the following highly energetic language: "Otez-moi cette peinture: pour le vulgaire qui l'admire,

elle est d'un détestable exemple; pour les honnêtes gens qui savent à quel sentiment elle répond, elle est un sujet de remords. L'auteur a été payé, je suppose; je demande que cette toile soit enlevée, ratissée, dégraissée, puis vendue comme filasse au chiffonnier."

I agree with Proudhon so far as this, that Vernet's work has no intellectual or moral value, and that it is not even in any high sense artistic. Nevertheless, he was a great representative man, and, in his own peculiar way, one of the most marvellously endowed men who ever lived. He painted French soldiers so exactly as French soldiers understand themselves that his works are, as it were, collective works; it is as if the whole French army had taken up paint-brushes, and, suddenly gifted with pictorial skill, wrought together unanimously. His pictures ought to be preserved as a thoroughly faithful record of the common French military mind of this age. The French soldier has a peculiar professional character, and, when it is not natural to him as a man, he rapidly acquires it by contact. Vernet loved that character; and as he painted what he loved, he did it with a fidelity which, whatever critics may say, was by no means superficial. Gay, brave, thoughtless, poor, cheerful under privation, happy with a little luxury or honor, — merry and kind habitually, yet stern and savage on occasion, — of almost childish simplicity, yet with a tiger-like spring and fury in attack, — these little madder-breeched heroes were beloved by Vernet sympathetically. He took the utmost interest in them all, knew every thing about their existence, could remember every item of their uniforms as a mother remembers the little frocks of her own children. Proudhon has a profound contempt for this interest in externals, but what is a soldier without his uniform* and his arms? And Vernet could remember faces too, and paint every soldier from memory whom he had once looked at attentively. Proudhon is angry at Vernet's honest taste for military life in its less elevating aspects; but what is more wearisome than perpetual heroics?

Proudhon finds it convenient to admit the degradation of

modern art in order to herald the great reform which in his opinion is to renew and reinvigorate it. This reform is the substitution of justice and truth for æsthetic quality as the aim of the artist. We are familiar with this principle already in England in another form. Mr. Ruskin has often told us that art ought to place truth first, and beauty second. Proudhon goes a step farther, and says that in the human mind there is but a duality, or rather polarity, Conscience and Science, or in other words, Justice and Truth; the faculty which perceives beauty he excludes, or wholly subordinates. Certainly there is much great art which is devoid of beauty, as for instance Durer's; and there is much small art which has beauty, or at least that lower form of it which we call prettiness: yet the best art is both true and beautiful. Proudhon so strongly detests the principle of art for art, that what he most undervalues in works of art is precisely their artistic quality. Like many men of narrow culture who have got hold of a great truth, he has been dragged out of his depth by it. It seems to me that the right theory on this subject has never been precisely stated even by Ruskin, and still less by Proudhon. The relation of truth to æsthetic quality in painting is one of inferior rank, but prior necessity. This complex sort of relation occurs in many other things. In building, for instance, the work of the mason is of inferior rank to the work of the architect, yet of prior necessity. In literature, grammatical accuracy of language is of inferior rank to the poetical gift, yet of prior necessity. In music, truth of intonation is of inferior rank to musical feeling, yet of prior necessity. So that, in my view, truth is to be put *before* beauty as the first thing to be asked for, yet not *above* beauty as if it were the higher thing.*

* Proudhon never attempts to estimate the value of thought and imagination in art, and they can scarcely be brought under his duality. I should say that, in art, natural truth is lower than artistic invention, and yet more necessary; whilst artistic invention is lower than thought, and yet, for pictorial purposes, more necessary. In art, as in life, necessity and rank are often in inverse proportion, and what is most necessary is first asked for. The food of the body is the first want, the food of the mind the second. The material qualities of art are its first necessity; the spiritual come after.

- All these theories and reasonings of Proudhon, of which I have endeavored to give an accurate account, are introductory to the main object of his work, which is the elevation of Courbet to the rank of a great *rational* artist, the reformer and regenerator of art. I prefer to reserve this part of the subject, and treat Courbet in some future work, when I shall have had fuller opportunities for studying him.

XVII.

TWO ART PHILOSOPHERS.*

THE illusions of perspective exist in the intellectual, as they do in the material world. As the true relations of solar systems cannot be learned or understood without the help of science, so the relations of intellectual systems are not to be comprehended without the aid of philosophy. And as, on the one hand, it is not necessary to the forcible and effectual life of a man of action that he should accurately conceive of the rank of his own planet amongst the heavenly bodies, so, on the other, it is not necessary to the success of certain special forms of intellectual activity that the laborer should justly estimate the importance of his own little intellectual world, or precisely ascertain its place in the universe of mind.

This is especially true of artists. An artist is a man who by long labor has trained himself to be able to express one version of one artistic idea,† — his personal conception of the idea dominant for the time in his own country. If there is a struggle for supremacy between two or more artistic ideas, the artist believes in one, and gives his life to realize his private conception of it, usually looking upon the others with antagonism or contempt. As a matter of curiosity, it is always interesting to know what artists think of each other; but their opinions about art

* "Philosophie de l'Art." Par H. Taine, Leçons Professées à l'École des Beaux Arts. Paris: Baillière. "Le Spiritualisme dans l'Art." Par Charles Lévêque, Professeur de Philosophie au Collège de France. Paris: Baillière.

† Of course I use the words "artistic idea" in a special sense. I should be very sorry to seem to imply that artists had not as many ideas as other people, in the current acceptation of the word. What I mean is the vision of desired perfection, which for every artist is necessarily one.

are valuable only as to special matters of fact, which their study of nature has enabled them to ascertain, or as indications of the existence of attractions and repulsions of which even the most acute thinkers might never suspect the existence. It is of course possible for an artist to raise himself from time to time out of the little plot of ground which he himself cultivates, and, like a man in the car of a balloon looking down on his own garden, see its true size and position, and it is also just possible for an artist so given to intellectual aërostation to return after each excursion in the upper regions, and cultivate his own acre in humble and laborious contentment, knowing well its littleness, and all the defects of its situation, yet loving it enough to be happy in it. This may be done, and in two or three instances it has been done; but its extreme rarity almost, though not quite, justifies the general belief that there is something essentially incompatible between the practical and speculative intellects. One might more profitably listen to a discourse about art by such a layman as Taine, than to one by such an artist as was Léopold Robert. He was very justly famous as a practical artist, yet Gustave Planche said of his written observations on art, "His common-place style, which I find fault with, comes from the common-place of his thoughts themselves. What he says about the masters of his art is so obvious that to have said it there was no necessity to be the painter of the 'Moissonneurs.' Any *bourgeois* who had walked about in picture galleries would say as much, and say it as well. In reading these letters of Robert, one remains convinced that the practice of art, and the understanding of the general ideas which govern all the forms of invention, are two perfectly distinct things. The understanding of these ideas does not lead to the practice of painting or sculpture, architecture or music; but it may happen to eminent artists, and L. Robert's correspondence is there to prove it, to enunciate about these arts, thoughts so very common-place, so very useless, so very inapplicable, so utterly worn, so perfectly empty, that they make the most indulgent reader smile."

These considerations may prepare us to understand the

position of M. Taine. He is not an artist, nor even an art critic, but an art philosopher. This distinction between art critics and art philosophers is, I am aware, a new one, and I may be allowed the space of a paragraph for its clearer definition.

An art critic, having continually to judge of small points of practical success or failure in the overcoming of particular difficulties, must necessarily be himself minutely acquainted with the practical details of art. Persons like Proudhon, who set up as art critics without this special knowledge, on the ground that since they judge only results, processes do not concern them, are always incapable of true criticism, because they know nothing of the real struggles and aims of artists, and so may praise them for their simplest successes, and remain indifferent to their most arduous achievements. On the other hand (as we have just seen) the practical artist (who is nothing more) may fail as a critic, on account of the very concentration and limitation of his view. His own object is seen by him in proportions so exaggerated, that other aims, not less great and worthy in themselves, are hidden and dwarfed by it. Thus Ingres says that drawing is the whole of art, and that color may be mastered in one week; after which, what is the value of his opinion about colorists? The true critic sees qualities in more accurate proportions than M. Ingres; nor could any critic tell us that the eye might be educated to color in eight days, without forfeiting for ever all claim to be listened to. So that on the one hand the critic is not to be ignorant of technicalities like Proudhon, nor absorbed in one technical aim like Ingres; but he ought to combine a thorough knowledge of practical matters with a theoretic largeness of view. When this theoretic largeness becomes the main characteristic of the writer; when he sees art habitually in vast systems and groupings occupying in their aggregate the whole field of art history, there is always a probability that the critic will lose himself in the philosopher, and that the utmost which he will be able to say safely about any particular work of art will be to fix its place in the artistic development of humanity.

Yet philosophy of this broad kind, if it be sound, has a definite function and use. It is the only force capable of repressing the narrow self-assertion of artistic sects. The devotee of some special idea is always so possessed by the idea, that he cannot see it in its relation to other ideas. What bigoted "classic" or ardent "romantic" ever sanely appreciated the services of both classicism and romanticism? To go to partisans in art for sound views of the whole subject is like going to a Red Republican, or a believer in the divine right of kings, for a rational political philosophy. For as the wise politician is a supporter of constitutional monarchy in England, a friend of imperialism in Russia, and of republicanism in Switzerland, because of these three forms of government each is the best in its own time and place, so an intelligent student of art may dispassionately approve of its various developments, and thank God that he has been born late enough to study at once the severe ideality of the Greek, the grotesque imagination of the Goth, the science and taste of the Renaissance artists, and the earnest naturalism of the moderns.

And now at last this wider philosophy has found an official advocate. In the very centre and head-quarters of academic tradition, the *École des Beaux Arts*, a professor has told the students, what no painter would be likely to tell them, that art is a natural product of humanity, as vegetation is a product of the soil; and that its varieties are the inevitable result of the changing states and circumstances of mankind, just as one place and climate has one flora and another another. Nor does he hesitate to give expression to the inference that the only duty of each country and generation is to produce freely its own flowers. How wide the interval from the old academic tradition to this tolerant and liberal doctrine! How pleasant to hear that what is best for us to do is that which is most our own, and to be released for ever from all obligation to reproduce an art which was the expression of a life we have not lived! We, who have been preached to about the duty of imitating the Greeks till some of us had come to that

point of weariness that we hated the very name of Hellas, may congratulate ourselves that an authorized teacher has advanced a theory by which it may be permitted to us to love Greek art heartily, and yet not waste our whole lives in the vain endeavor to make our own work a repetition of it.

M. Taine's theory is not very profound because it is so obviously true, but the truisms of thinkers are very daring speculations in the temples of tradition; and M. Taine deserves honor, not so much for what he has thought, as for having ventured to give utterance to his thought in a place where its distinct expression marked a new era in official art teaching. Even if M. Taine were to be succeeded by some retrograde professor, the students who heard him are not likely to forget his lesson, and the conclusions to which it leads. If it is true, as this new teacher says, that the artist is the product of his time, it is evident (they will infer) that no modern artist can by effort become like the product of another time. If we are orange-trees, we shall produce oranges; if fig-trees, we may blamelessly produce figs. If we are in too chilly a climate, our fruit will never ripen, so (as artists) we shall be unproductive; and the climate, for every artist, is the collective life and intellect of his own time. Those who produce in it are not necessarily the best, but those whom the climate best suits. The average amount of natural artistic endowment is much the same in all ages; but one epoch favors the best, and another that which is not quite the best, and so downwards till some epochs favor no art at all. This seems to be M. Taine's view; but here it may be objected that the permanent characteristics of races, as well as the temporary characteristics of epochs, may have much to do with the matter; and that the average percentage of natural art intellects in the French race is possibly greater than amongst the Tartars or Esquimaux. This consideration, however, in no wise diminishes the natural effect of M. Taine's view of art on practical work and on criticism. If he is in the main right as I believe him to be, it is useless for us, as artists to try to do work of any

kind whatever but our own; and it is childish in us, as critics, to find fault with schools of art because they differ from our own ideal and from each other. Our business, as art philosophers, is not to find fault, but to note characteristics; and it is as idle in us to set up some kind of art as perfection, blaming all other in proportion as it deviates from that standard, as it would be in a botanist to set up the vine leaf as the correct thing in leaf beauty, and condemn the willow as heretical for its obstinate non-conformity to his pet pattern.

M. Taine thus defines his art philosophy:—

“Ours is modern, and differs from the old in being historic, and not dogmatic; that is to say it does not impose precepts, but ascertains and proclaims * laws. The old æsthetics gave first a definition of the beautiful, and said, for example, that the beautiful is the expression of the moral ideal, or else that it is the expression of the invisible, or, again, that it is the expression of human passions; then starting thence as from a legal decision, absolved, condemned, admonished, and guided. I am very happy not to have so heavy a task to perform; I have not to guide you—I should be too much embarrassed. My only duty is to exhibit facts, and to show you how these facts were produced. The modern method, which I endeavor to follow, and which is beginning to introduce itself into all the modern sciences, consists in regarding human labors, and in particular, works of art, as facts and products whose characteristics are to be noted and whose causes are to be investigated—no more. So understood, Science neither proscribes nor pardons; she states and explains. She does not say to you, ‘Despise Dutch art, it is too coarse, and enjoy none but Italian.’ Neither does she say to you, ‘Despise Gothic art; it lacks health; enjoy none but the Greek.’ She leaves to every one the liberty to follow his private preferences, to love best that which is in conformity with his own temperament, and to study, with a more attentive care, that which best corresponds to the development of his own mind. As for Science herself, she has sympathy for all forms of art and for all schools, even for those which seem most opposed; she accepts them as so many manifestations of the human mind; she considers that the more numerous and contrary they are, the more they show the mind of humanity under new and numerous aspects; she acts like Botany, which studies with equal interest, now the orange-tree and the laurel, now the fir and the birch; she is herself a sort of Botany, applied not to plants, but to the labors of men.

* I use these two words to get the double force of *constater* employed in the original.



In this character she follows the general movement which draws together in our day the moral and the natural sciences, and which, giving to the former the principles, the precautions, the directions of the latter, communicates to them the same solidity, and assures to them the same progress."

As a matter of purely literary criticism, it may be added that M. Taine is in possession of an unusually clear and cultivated style, rising occasionally even to eloquence, — a great advantage to any writer, but positively indispensable to one who constitutes himself the advocate of views not yet generally received. There are several brilliant pages which I should have been glad to quote in the original, but have not space. The best of these are, perhaps, the sketches of Greek civilization and Gothic architecture.

If M. Taine is a historical positivist in art, — that is, a philosopher who considers all the varieties of art as equally subjects for investigation from the scientific stand-point, whether we regard them as representations of nature or as manifestations of mind, — M. Lévêque is a being of another order, a passionate spiritualist, with a capacity for quite religious fervor in behalf of the doctrines in which, as he believes, are bound up the fate of the Fine Arts and the moral health of all humanity.

Spiritualism, as M. Lévêque uses the word, means the habitual reference to the ideal; materialism, the forgetfulness of ideal excellence in the absorbing study of material things. The great difficulty of spiritualism is to distinguish between noble ideals and those baser creations of the imaginative faculty, which, so far from being higher than material nature, fall short of it or degrade it. It is the business of philosophy, says M. Lévêque, to establish this distinction.

"No one now doubts the power of those concealed movers which at one time push societies onward, and at another pull them violently back, and which are called ideas. It has been given to society to choose between the good and the bad movers. The bad are the ideas in which error predominates; the good, those where predominates truth. To recognize, unravel, clear up, fortify, develop, the true element; to distinguish, lay bare, point out, weaken the false element in ideas — such is the office of philosophy; and the

older a society is, the more men's minds in it are ripe and disposed for criticism and discussion, the more imperious does this duty of philosophy become."

M. Lévêque goes on to argue that philosophy divides itself naturally into specialities, and that there are as many philosophies as there are sciences. Thus there is a philosophy of history, a philosophy of medicine, a philosophy of political economy; and all these terms take their place in modern language as the ideas which they express become clearer and more definite. It follows that philosophy is under the necessity of continual expansion and subdivision to correspond with the extent of modern acquisition and its minute ramification in specialities. There is a philosophy of the beautiful, just as there is a philosophy of the true.

When we get hold of a book like this, with a subject so peculiarly tempting to the dealer in vague and pompous generalities, our best course is, first, to read it through with patient attention, and then try to find out what new deposit the book has left in us. The great difficulty of the spiritualist philosophy has always been that, although it rightly insisted on the necessity for an idea, it was embarrassed when we inquired of it some direction and guidance in our own search after the ideal. Hence spiritualism, in its practical issues, is rather a retrospective than an encouraging philosophy; it names certain artists of the past as its saints and heroes, but has a tendency to restrain present productiveness within the limits of traditionary repetition. What it most dreads is materialism, or the objective study of matter; therefore it has to insist on an intellectual ideal; and as it is of no use to talk about such ideals as are not yet embodied, nor (so far as we can know) even conceived, spiritualism is always compelled to recur to ideals which have already been made visible to us in marble or on canvas, its favorite examples being Greek sculpture and the designs of Raphael, to which a Frenchman is likely to add the paintings of Nicolas Poussin. By dint of incessant repetition of this reference, spiritualism has educated whole generations of artists in the belief that by looking at these works, and copying them, and imitating

them, they might themselves reach this wonderful and mysterious goal, the ideal which so fascinated from afar the eyes of the devout philosophers. Those who, in their own way, sought new ideals in nature, were condemned as materialists, or mere copiers of matter. The misfortune of the spiritualists, as the directors of practical effort, was, that they were always living up in the clouds, and talking about *qualities* as severed from *things*, seeking the good, the beautiful, the true, conceived as metaphysical notions, which was a hopeless search for visible adjectives. You might just as profitably set out in search of speed as an entity.

To escape this imputation of cloudiness, M. Lévêque tells us that the spiritualist philosophy is now observant, and has travelled over land and sea, which turns out to mean that M. Cousin undertook a voyage across the Channel to study the Poussins in England. It was a pity to lower the sublime generality of the phrase by this adduced proof. Spiritualism voyaging over land and sea was rather a grand and imposing idea. M. Cousin taking a through ticket to London by Calais, or, if economically disposed, by Boulogne, or, if parsimoniously, by Dieppe, makes somehow a weaker impression on the imagination, and carries one to prosaic associations of little rolling steamboats, and that terrible temporary ailment which subjugates so many voyagers, spiritualist or materialist. Still M. Cousin deserves hearty praise for having been willing to use his corporeal eyes instead of evolving art criticism out of his moral consciousness. There are two duties of the writer on art, — to look and to think; but philosophers are too apt to consider the first a work of supererogation, whilst they perform the second with infinite patience and diligence.

Our difficulty with Spiritualism is to get at the meaning of its great abstraction — “the Beautiful.” M. Lévêque fixes this for us in a theistic conception. Pantheism could not conceive of it, but Theism can, because Theism has conceived God, who is the Beautiful, and whom, without understanding, we conceive. “We have then, in the in-

nermost depths of our reason, an absolute type of grandeur, not of physical grandeur, but of intellectual and moral grandeur, that is to say, of perfection. Since the Infinite Beauty is conceived, a measure is given us for imperfect and finite beauties."

Reasoning of this sort is convenient sometimes with children, because it overawes them, and prevents them from asking questions, but it is unsatisfactory to men who are out of the childish stage of intellectual development. "The Infinite Beauty is conceived;" Humanity has conceived Divinity, and so has a fixed standard by which to measure finite perfections. Could any thing be more various, more fluctuating, more emphatically *unfixed* than men's conceptions of the Supreme Being? Our conception of Him varies from year to year with our varying knowledge and intellectual force. This is quite inevitable; it would be inevitable still if he lived familiarly amongst us as an earthly sovereign. We could never form a true conception of Him so long as we remained inferior to Himself. Before fancying that we can conceive of God it would be well to reflect whether we can even conceive of mere human intellect in its highest examples. The superior may be admired, or even adored by the inferior, but he cannot be conceived by him. The English conception of God is not the French conception; it is certainly not the Scotch; and if we may judge by the pious allusions of transatlantic politicians, it is most assuredly not the American. Nor does the highest contemporary English conception very closely resemble that held by minds of the same relative rank in the same country thirty years ago. Setting aside atheists and young children it is likely that there exist in England just now at least fifteen million different conceptions of the *English conception* of the Deity. How then are we to refer to the Idea of Deity as a fixed visible standard of Beauty? And even if we could suppose this possible as to intellectual and moral perfection, how are we to apply this standard to physical perfection? How reason from the Beauty of Goodness to the beauty of a statue or a picture? It is this awkward necessity for

shifting the argument from morals to matter, that demonstrates the weakness of dogmatic spiritualism.* These philosophers first tell us that they have hit upon the immutable, eternal Beauty, which is moral Beauty ; and then they come with that to a piece of carved marble, or painted canvas, and try to apply their immutable standard. It would be as reasonable to devise a converse criticism, and try to measure the accuracy of history with a two-foot rule.

The spiritualist would find no words severe enough to express his contempt for a philosophy of art which professed to have no fixed standard of beauty, and I dare say that if I were to develop my own theory of æsthetics I should be called by hard names. What I say is, that spiritualism does not erect fixed standards at all ; it only erects *words*, the signification of which fluctuates every day. It is amazing how easily men are governed and imposed upon by words, and the less they understand them the more readily they submit to them. To say, "the Beautiful is the standard of beauty" is a childish play upon words, because the beautiful is an abstraction having no visible existence.

At this point a spiritualist would probably accuse me of denying the existence of beauty altogether. Well, except as an adjective, an attribute, I do. It is a quality, not a being. Just so I would deny the separate existence of cleanliness or holiness. There are clean people and holy people, and clean places and holy places ; but you cannot detach the adjective, and set it up as an immutable standard of cleanliness or holiness. Of course we need some kind of standard, and we derive it from some visible example ; but if a higher example were shown us, we should quit our old standard, and take to the new one. For instance : our farmers have lately been told to be clean, in

* Imagine, for example, the absurdity of meditating upon the beauty of sacrifice in order to be able to judge of the comparative beauty of silks. The jurors at the International Exhibition would have failed to perceive the connection between the two, and the manufacturers at Lyons are probably not aware of it.

order to diminish the ravages of the cattle plague ; but as the word "cleanliness" would to them only signify English cleanliness, a higher example was appealed to ; not an abstraction, "the clean," as these philosophers say "the beautiful," but "Dutch cleanliness," as an art critic might counsel our artists to aim at a Dutch carefulness in execution.

I have no space to criticise M. Lévêque's work in detail, though I have read it with care. The central idea of it is that which I have just set before the reader. Though this central idea is certainly an illusion, spiritualism has rendered us the service of insisting upon the necessity for ideality in art. If there is no immutable standard of "the beautiful," there may still be an endless endeavor after that beauty which for each of us seems the best. M. Lévêque is especially right in desiring that artists should be penetrated with the faith that their art ought to have lofty intellectual, or psychological aims, and that it can only have enduring value in so far as it is a product of *mind*. With all my heart I agree with M. Lévêque in assigning to those forms of art which are the mere copyism of matter a much lower rank than is due to the art which conveys great messages from the soul of the artist to humanity. It is probable, however, that as to *what* particular art fell under each category there might be some difference of opinion between us.

XVIII.

FURNITURE: AN AFTER-DINNER CONVERSATION.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

THE HOST, MR. PLUMPTON, *a rich country gentleman.*
 MR. MANTLEY, *the clergyman of the parish.*
 MR. BURLEY, *a London merchant.*
 AN ARTIST.

Mr. Plumpton. My new house in London is just finished, and I am going to furnish it. I am in much perplexity about it. I should be happy to leave it all to my wife, but she is as much puzzled as myself. What am I to do?

Mr. Burley. You country gentlemen make difficulties out of every thing. It is the simplest thing in the world to furnish a house, when you've money enough. I furnished mine in a week, and very cheaply too. I said to myself, "If I give up my own time to it for a day or two I shall save as much as will pay me about a hundred pounds a day for my trouble; so it's worth my while." I took a quantity of notes and sovereigns and went about to a good many upholsterers and furniture dealers that I knew were in difficulties, offering generally about half as much as they asked for the things, but always in ready money. By this means I furnished my house very handsomely indeed for about fifteen hundred pounds. The furniture would fetch two thousand by auction.

Mr. Plumpton. You managed very cleverly; but my great difficulty is the question of taste. The old house here is provided with an immense quantity of miscellaneous furniture, and somehow does not look so bad after all, though the things, judged severely, are, no doubt, incongruous.

But my superfluous things here would not do in the new London house, which I must furnish newly, because it is a new building. It is a most embarrassing question.

The Artist. It is a most splendid opportunity.

Mr. Plumpton. Perhaps so, if one knew how to seize it. An opportunity, I suppose you mean, for the exercise of good taste. But I have no confidence in my own judgment in these matters. I have sense enough to be aware that my æsthetic faculty is exceedingly small.

Mr. Burley. My way of buying would not suit you, because you want the things all to be in the fashion, I suppose. But, as for taste, you can buy that for money like every thing else. Go to a good upholsterer — a respectable man, mind. It is his trade to understand the rules of taste, and he will give you the benefit of his knowledge, only he will make you pay handsomely for it.

Mr. Mantley. That would scarcely be safe. A man may be a respectable tradesman, and still have vulgar tastes. Upholsterers usually provide things to suit the majority, but you would scarcely furnish in a manner creditable to your taste by so easy a process as putting the whole matter into the hands of an upholsterer.

The Artist. Hear, hear!

Mr. Plumpton. I quite believe you; and that is exactly the cause of my peculiar anxiety at this moment. Of course if I thought that an upholsterer could help me out of it I should have no trouble. I am very unfortunately situated. I have got a smattering of art culture, as it is called, which prevents me from resting satisfied with vulgar ostentation; and yet I feel that my knowledge is very imperfect, and my private judgment not, as yet, to be relied upon. My father would have had no such anxiety. He lived in an unæsthetic age, and would have furnished like everybody else, and felt sure it was all right provided only the things were made of mahogany. My son will, probably, understand the fine arts better than I do; and, perhaps, even enjoy such an occasion as this as an opportunity for the exercise of his taste. But I, who stand between darkness and light, do not see my way very clearly.

The Artist. So far as I understand you, then, you wish your town house to be in some degree artistic.

Mr. Plumptre. I should like it to be in perfect taste throughout. I do not care about ostentation, but I must have every thing right and good ; and, as you say, in some degree artistic.

Mr. Burley. Your house will be very exceptional, for very few houses are artistic, especially in town. I don't care about art ; I like comfort. I never could sit down on an artistically carved chair. Mind you have your house comfortable, and never mind what our friend the artist tells you. Have good easy chairs — that's the sort of thing — and good bedding. I'm not particular to color ; and carving is a bother ; besides, as servants say, it takes twice as much cleaning as smooth furniture ; and, therefore, it costs a good deal, annually, in wages. But comfort, in our age, is necessary. A comfortable chair relieves anxiety. A chair should support all the frame without calling any muscle into action. As for wood, have smooth mahogany ; that's the best.

Mr. Mantley. Furniture, with you, seems to be purely a physical question. I think you are quite right in requiring it to be comfortable ; but might it not also be in some way expressive of intellectual feelings, and even capable of affording them gratification ?

The Artist. A house ought to be a work of art, just like a picture. Every bit of furniture in it should be a particle of a great composition chosen with reference to every other particle. A grain of color, a hundredth of an inch across, is of the utmost importance in a picture ; and a little ornament on a chimney-piece is of the utmost artistic importance in a house.

Mr. Burley. You are going quite beyond my depth now. My view of furniture is, that it ought to have a respectable, hospitable appearance, and to do justice at once to the wealth and good feeling of its owner. I like a fine sideboard, covered with costly plate, because it looks substantial ; and I like a good dining-table, surrounded with comfortable chairs, because it looks hospitable. I go little farther than that. It is

right, no doubt, for ladies to have elegance in their drawing-rooms, but that is beyond my province. A man's study or place of business should always be orderly and well-arranged, but it need not be elegant. Men, as it seems to me, ought to express, in their furniture, the three virtues of wealth, order, and hospitality. I would have no poor material of any kind — every thing quite substantial, and rich, and good. And mind to have plenty of drawers and cabinets; they are the whole machinery of order.

Mr. Plumpton. I should like to unite your different requirements. One of you wants art; another intellect, perhaps erudition; and another comfort, and that most desirable virtue, order. These things are not necessarily incompatible, though seldom seen in combination. My ambition shall be to combine them.

Mr. Mantley. Furniture is very expressive of moral qualities, and I think you never know a man accurately until you have seen the inside of his house. However you furnish yours, it will in the end only be an expression of yourself, or of those sentiments and ideas which may happen to be predominant when you furnish.

Mr. Burley. A pretty theory, but not, I think, applicable in the majority of cases. Most people's furniture expresses nothing whatever. It is simply ordered from the upholsterer, and there is an end of it. Still, of course, some people express themselves in their furniture — those, at least, who pay any attention to it.

Mr. Mantley. I am sure everybody who furnishes expresses himself one way or other. The mere fact of his leaving it to an upholsterer expresses a great deal, for it proves that the buyer has no taste of his own, and, therefore, at once excludes him from the æsthetic class.

The Artist. All who care about art pay great attention to furniture. A friend of mine, who really understands painting, is so exquisitely alive to harmony of color that I have seen him exclude a penholder from a large room because its color was discordant. To an eye so delicate as his every particle of color is of consequence, and therefore,

of course, he could never leave any thing to an upholsterer — not even the minutest detail.

Mr. Plumpton. I should feel obliged to you, Mr. Mantley, if you would develop your theory a little. Your idea that all men express themselves in furniture seems worth dwelling upon.

Mr. Mantley. The habits and feelings of whole classes imprint themselves on their furniture. The English aristocracy, for example, has certain ways of its own which other classes do not imitate successfully. A gentleman's house is always, evidently, a gentleman's house, though the owner may be quite poor. I do not say that it is always in good taste, for our gentry do not always distinguish themselves in the artistic department of furnishing; but still the objects, however ugly, and even shabby, all bear witness together that their owner is a gentleman. And a rich tradesman has another standard to which all his furnishing tends, so that you may know him at once by it. One difference is that a gentleman safely leaves many things with a frank aspect of age and wear on them — a habit brought on by living in old houses and constantly using old things; whereas every thing in a thriving tradesman's house is either quite new or at least in perfect repair. Another difference is that a gentleman's furnishing, though it be shabby and disorderly, is pretty sure to have some poetry about it — something of antiquity or culture, some tint of history, either belonging to his own family or the state; whereas a rich tradesman's house is generally comfortable, but very prosaic. But it is easier to feel these differences than to describe them.

Mr. Burley. You are right so far. For example, here is this old dining-room with hints of history enough to occupy an antiquary for hours; whereas in my dining-room, I, being a tradesman, have only the creature comforts of good chairs and tables and an uncommonly handsome carpet.

Mr. Mantley. I think it is there where you rich tradesmen are so expressive. Even in leaving the matter to the upholsterer you betray a strong love of the prosaic side of

wealth. Your furniture generally expresses a high degree of satisfaction in the possession of money, combined with some indifference to poetry.

Mr. Plumptre. The poetical side of furniture seems to be separate from, or at least independent of, the artistic. The little plain chess-table in the drawing-room here that you and I played upon last night is not at all an artistic piece of furniture, but it is poetical—that is, it excites a deep emotional interest, for it once belonged to Napoleon I., and its chequer of ivory and ebony has often served him for a mimic battlefield. One's ideas run from that to other fields of other combats—to Marengo and Waterloo; and so the table is a poetical object, for it excites emotion. But it is not artistic, being in the worst extreme of a wretched epoch in art, the false classicism of the first Empire.

Mr. Mantley. It is observable, too, that poets furnish with reference to the feelings, and artists mainly for the gratification of the artistic eye. It is intensely agreeable to an intellectual man to be frequently reminded of great men whom he admires by objects which either belonged to them or are, in some obvious way, associated with their memories.

The Artist. But are the two aims incompatible? Could not a house be furnished both intellectually and artistically.

Mr. Mantley. The aims are not necessarily incompatible, but in practice they very much interfere with each other. People generally have to obey some leading idea when they furnish. The leading ideas of our middle class are the expression of wealth and the love of regularity and order; hence the richness of the materials they employ, the formal arrangement of absolutely similar objects, their faultless cleanliness and polish, their perfect mechanical design, and the total absence of intellectual, or even æsthetic interest in all of them. On the other hand, the poet or scholar is, as a rule, given to the chance accumulation of odd things as they please him, by recalling some cherished association; and these things can give no pleasure to the eye whether of the artist or the housekeeper. And then again we have the

artist nature, which, of course, pleases itself by arranging about it forms and colors, so as to afford itself endless delight in the quiet contemplation of them. The difficulty of combining the two last is that the severe eye of the artist would, in nine cases out of ten, exclude as discordant some piece of furniture that the scholar might love for reasons having nothing to do with its appearance.

Mr. Plumpton. It is very amusing to study character in furniture. What very great virtues may be shown in very poor things! I have a neighbor, an old maiden lady, whose furniture is not what our friend Mr. Burley would call handsome, and it is certainly not artistic; nevertheless, it inspires in me the utmost respect and esteem for its possessor, for it is so simple and unpretending, and yet so useful, and orderly, and comfortable. Probably at an auction the whole household of furniture would not fetch fifty pounds; and yet it is so well arranged, and harmonizes so well with the quiet, unaffected, and somewhat methodical habits of the lady of the house, that every bit of it has, in my eyes, a value far beyond that of the best new furniture in a cabinet-maker's shop. Indeed, I have heard the old lady declare that she would not on any account admit a piece of new furniture into her house, because it would spoil her old things by contrast; and once, when she wanted a sideboard, instead of ordering one at the cabinet-maker's, she hunted about for months to find something that would go with her other things. At last she hit upon a quaint old structure of dark mahogany, of a form at least thirty years out of fashion. This exactly suited her, and it now looks as if it had always been in the house. Proofs of the same good taste and right judgment may be found in every thing about her.

Mr. Mantley. I have as great a dislike to new furniture as your friend the old maid. New furniture is as bad as a new house — it has no associations. Still, even new furniture may express character. For instance, Mr. Burley, what should you say that drawers express?

Mr. Burley. The love of order. The main use of furniture in a business point of view is, that it is such a help

to order; indeed without it order would be altogether impossible. The business habits of men may be guessed from their furniture. The great object is to keep things at once separate from each other, and easily accessible to their owner. Disorder and confusion are always the punishment of people who will not be at the pains to understand this theory. No amount of disorder ever conquered me, and I know by practical experience in affairs that I am able to cope with any amount of details, but not single-handed. I require the assistance of the cabinet-maker, and he is the first man I call in when there is a difficulty. Some time since, being with a country gentleman of moderate estate, who had a fancy for managing his own property, and who, consequently, had got it into a state of awful confusion, I helped him out of it in a fortnight in this way. I got him to assign me a particular little room in his house to do what I liked with. I sent for the joiner. I had the room lined all round from top to bottom, with small drawers varying in depth, made of common deal, and so arranged that four locks locked them all.* When this was finished I had the front of the drawers, that is, the whole wall of the room, painted dark green. When the paint was dry I admitted the owner of the house. "What are all these drawers for?" said he. "To get your papers in order; fetch me all your papers." Well, he brought thousands of different papers, all in great tin boxes. Now a box, especially a deep one, is a barbarous piece of furniture for purposes of order; you may pack it in a very orderly manner, but how are you to get at the things afterwards? A box lacks the necessary quality of accessibility. You have to turn out twenty things to get at one; hence inevitable disorder. My friend's tin boxes were all in that state; there were papers in them that ought to have been kept quite accessible, that nobody could have found without a week's labor. He and I emptied all the boxes, and arranged the papers in the drawers according to a definite

* Quite possible by means of a simple arrangement of hinged slips, vertical and horizontal.

plan of mine, estate by estate, with subdivisions of farm by farm. I chalked the contents of every drawer on the outside of it; then I locked all the drawers, and sent for a painter who painted the words in great white, legible capital letters. After that, I left the house; but a year afterwards my friend told me that he managed his business with surprising facility, and could at any time get at any little fact he wanted — thanks to the drawers.

Mr. Plumpton. The law of order appears to be, *divide and subdivide, but keep accessible*. People generally do not subdivide enough. They imagine that a very rude and broad subdivision will suffice; but, if things are to be instantaneously accessible, the subdivision must be carried very far. The old rude system of deep boxes is a case in point; if you subdivide them much, the things are no longer accessible. I think the shopkeepers teach us a very useful lesson if we would only profit by it; the order in a well-kept shop is really very admirable. And it is all managed by three articles of furniture — the shelf, the box, and the drawer. Boxes on shelves are indeed drawers in another form.

The Artist. Studios are generally very disorderly; I think we don't pay sufficient attention to furniture as a help to order.

Mr. Burley. You painters always seek the picturesque in furniture, not the useful. You could not endure a rational chest of drawers; you must have carved cabinets with griffins, and suits of sham armor hanging over them under pretext of painting armor, which most of you never paint at all.

Mr. Plumpton. Pray don't be hard on carved oak, for my house is full of it.

Mr. Burley. Here it is a different thing. You never bought any carved oak; and yours is really ancestral, and therefore respectable. But artists' studios are furnished from Wardour Street. I have a great dislike to modern antiques; I think it is affectation to buy them.

The Artist. There is no affectation at all about it in our case. We like carved things because their varied sur-

faces are more pleasing to the eye, and more like nature, than dull flat mahogany. In the same way we are very fond of tapestry; nothing is better for a painting room than carved oak backed by rich tapestry, because in the carved oak we have a delightful mystery and variety of form, and in the tapestry the same mystery and variety in color.

Mr. Plumpton. Should you think the love of carved oak an indication of artistic taste? I know many men who like pictures and are indifferent to carved oak, and, conversely, others who, though passionately fond of carved oak, care nothing whatever for painting.

The Artist. Refined painting and rough wood carving appeal, in many ways, to two different ranks of mind. It is possible to enjoy the quaint richness of carved wood, without any very delicate sense of either form or color, such as is necessary for the appreciation of pictures. On the other hand, a lover of pictures might easily become too fastidious to enjoy the uncouth and barbarous forms of ordinary Elizabethan wood carving. A connoisseur, in whom the love of form was stronger than the love of the picturesque, would have plain furniture of exquisite form and concentrate all his sculpture in marble statues.

Mr. Mantley. I think it a pity that the simple country art of quaint wood carving should be lost to our common joiners; I have tried to teach one or two. I can carve tolerably myself, and have made a wardrobe which Mr. Plumpton offered me two cows for.

Mr. Plumpton. I would have made the offer in money, but I thought your reverence might be offended; the wardrobe is really an admirable specimen of inventive, quaint wood carving. Mantley chose the story of Joseph for his subject, and worked it out panel by panel, quite in the spirit of genuine Gothic art.

Mr. Mantley. I was inspired by the study of the wonderful choir at Amiens, the most perfect achievement in wood carving which has descended to us. I intend the wardrobe for the vestry of my church. But about teaching men to carve; the difficulty is, that they are all mechanics

in these times, whereas the old fellows were really artists, though quite rough ones. Set modern workmen, for example, to carve a running pattern of vine leaves. All the leaves are sure to come exactly alike, and you might as well get plaster mouldings at so much a foot. In England at present we have a few exquisite artist carvers, but then they are gentlemen sculptors in wood. What we want is a class of plain workmen, able to do rough and picturesque, but inventive and effective wood carving for furniture; and that class does not exist here. I am aware that our rich people are as much in fault as the poor ones. A carver once told me that his employers would not allow any variety in his flourishes, but measured them with compasses. According to their ideas, good carving meant accurately mechanical cutting of curves out of mahogany. Such training is nothing short of a systematic suppression of genius; and that is the way our ordinary furniture carvers are trained. Every mahogany sideboard has two little flourishes on the sides, with an absurd central flourish on the top of its back. To produce those ornaments is the beginning and end of ordinary cabinet maker's carving.

The Artist. The career of an artist is peculiarly difficult to follow; and, unless he has private fortune, or the assistance of liberal friends, he is for many years in continual danger of being compelled to fall back upon something else. In England, the unsuccessful artist usually becomes a teacher of drawing. In France he often becomes a sculptor of house fronts, a decorative painter, or a wood carver. Wood carvers, who have tried to be artists, like to be artists still, and they work in wood artistically. Add to this the fact that taste and invention are much sought after, and highly appreciated in Paris, and you will account for the contrast. Artistic workmen carvers abound in Paris, and are very rare in London. Carved oak in Paris is no modern antique — no piece of affectation at all. It is a flourishing contemporary art, full of life, and proving its vitality by an immense production. And it is not the mechanical reproduction of old

forms. The variety and novelty of the products prove the vitality of the art, even more than their multiplicity. Every day hundreds of pieces of carved furniture are sent into the market, and not at high prices. This furniture is just as honest in material as that of the days of Queen Elizabeth; it is all in solid wood — there is no veneering.

Mr. Plumpton. This is practical, and may suit my case. That furniture is cheap, you say, in Paris.

The Artist. There are some shops on the Boulevards where it is very dear; but, if you hunt up the workmen themselves at their own houses, and get acquainted with them, you may obtain good work at very moderate prices. You may get a very pretty carved chair for about a sovereign, a good carved bookcase for about eight, and a rich cabinet for sixteen or twenty. The bookcase in my painting room has a carved cornice and frieze, carved frames to its glass doors, a large drawer (the foot of which is massively carved), two carved panels to the lower part, two human heads, four lions' heads, and two full length statuettes. Add to this four rich bunches of fruit, and some carving on the edges of the shelves, and consider the dimensions — nearly eight feet high — and the fact that every scrap of wood about it is genuine oak, guiltless of veneer, and you cannot think it dear at eight pounds. I have a table, with massive twisted legs and connecting pieces, carved at the intersections, a large drawer, a band of effective carving all round as deep as the drawer, and a carved moulding above; the whole in perfectly solid oak. I bought that table quite new of the man who made it. I gave him exactly two pounds for it. A dealer in London asked me ten for a very similar table.

Mr. Mantley. The modern carving in Paris is all either *renaissance* or modern naturalistic. They can't carve Gothic. They don't seem to me to understand Gothic.*

* There is a school of Gothic stone sculptors in France, trained under Viollet-le Duc, in the old cathedrals, who have really caught the true Gothic spirit. However, these men do not produce furniture; so I cannot speak of them here.

The Artist. The wood carvers are trained in the *renaissance* school, and produce work like the best of the later *renaissance* carving, modified to a considerable extent by the modern study of nature. I had a curious instance of how incapable a true *renaissance* carver is of reproducing Gothic ideas. I designed a piece of furniture in the true old Gothic spirit—full of quaint Gothic inventions, especially a great battle of griffins and serpents—that I very much wished to see realized in wood. I could not get it done in all Paris. The carvers would not work from my design, but always asked permission to make a design of their own from it. They produced very clever designs indeed, but they entirely eliminated the Gothic feeling: they translated the design into *renaissance*. At last I abandoned the project.

Mr. Mantley. The specimens of French carving at the Exhibition were very dear, though exquisitely beautiful. The price of one small black cabinet was over twelve hundred pounds.

The Artist. That was not merely carving in the ordinary sense; it was excellent sculpture in wood. Furniture of that sort is a product of Fine Art, just like pictures, and naturally brings high prices. But that I was speaking of is rude in execution.

Mr. Burley. I have seen first-rate carving done by a machine, and cheaper than your Frenchmen could do it.

Mr. Mantley. All machine carving that I have seen loses its charm at the second glance. Just at first you may fancy that there is something in it; but, as soon as the eye has had time to wander over its details, the cheat is discovered, and your interest is gone. There is no life in the touches—no expression.

The Artist. You might as well try to paint by a machine.

Mr. Plumpton. What do you think of the modern substitution of the beauty of wood for the effect of carving? In Queen Elizabeth's time, men sought richness by cutting their wood into different shapes. Now we get the most

richly marked woods, and show their natural beauty by polishing them. Is this an advance or not?

Mr. Mantley. I think it a sign of the decline of art. It is the substitution of a beauty ready-made to hand, and easily come by, for the intellectual beauty of man's labor. Fancy the difference between a Gothic panel containing a bas-relief and a moderate sideboard panel containing a piece of well-selected and prettily veined mahogany: in the one is much thought and intellect, in the other nothing but a pretty piece of wood.

Mr. Plumpton. Yet I think the use of beautiful woods, simply polished, is quite as justifiable as the old Venetian use of polished sheets, or veneers of marble. There is no difference between the two cases; for in both man takes a natural product, and cuts it into thin slices, which he polishes to show their beauty.

The Artist. Yes, but the Venetians used their marble artistically, and we use our mahogany without any sense of its artistic availableness. I have rarely seen sheets of beautiful wood employed, with a just sense of their value, as decoration. There are possibilities of great achievements in this way, for the field is almost untried. Wood of different kinds gives a great variety of good color.

Mr. Plumpton. There are two other debatable questions connected with this. Ought we to veneer? and ought we to encourage painted imitation of particular woods?

Mr. Mantley. I am not so severe as Mr. Ruskin on these points. His laudable love of honesty in art carried him, in this instance, much too far. Veneering is a natural consequence of the love of beautiful woods, and is not dishonest, because everybody knows that very beautifully veined furniture is sure to be veneered, if its form will admit of it. I consider veneering to be the exercise of a wise economy, and no more dishonest than gilding. Again, as to painting imitations of woods, why not? There is no fraud about it. None but a very unobservant person would ever imagine that painted deal was oak; but the

graining gives more variety to the eye than one color could, and it is in its way an imitation of nature, and therefore indicative of an appreciation of natural beauty, though of a very humble order. Of course, if it were done to deceive, I should condemn it, and veneering too.

The Artist. But modern English furniture is really dishonest. A friend of mine paid thirteen guineas for a table that will not bear any comparison with the one I got for fifty francs of that honest French carver. My friend's table is veneered, of course, all over, and has two borders of machine carving running all round it that are simply glued on. The table pretends to be of oak, but the carved borders are stained beech, because beech is easier to work. My table is all solid oak and carved by the hand. I would not exchange mine for his if he gave me a sovereign into the bargain.

Mr. Burley. Our cabinet-makers carry veneering very far. They sometimes veneer wood on both sides and on the edges. It takes rather a keen eye to find them out, for they contrive to follow the way the grain would run in solid wood. That is fraudulent; at least it deceives many purchasers. I know people who have bought furniture under the impression that it was solid, which furniture I found, on examination, to be artfully veneered on common white wood. I think, though, our English cabinet-makers turn out, as a rule, work unsurpassed for accuracy of adjustment. Their measurements are true and careful, and their work is practically convenient, because it runs smoothly. I have no doubt your French carver makes more picturesque furniture, but I should be much surprised if his drawers work as well as those my cabinet-maker turns out.

Mr. Plumpton. We have kept long enough on generalities; let us get to something definite. I want to furnish my house in London. I beg you all to give me the benefit of your advice. Let us begin with the dining-room.

Mr. Burley. Mahogany, of course. It is warm and comfortable looking. Have dark red cushions and a green flock paper. I hate a chilly dining-room. The French,

who love good eating, don't seem to understand how necessary a comfortable dining-room is to the enjoyment of a good dinner.

Mr. Mantley. Their dining-rooms are very simply furnished, because they never sit in them either between or after meals, but as we sit here in council over Plumpton's Port, we enjoy his thick carpet and soft seats. So I should agree with you in recommending a comfortable dining-room, but not as to the taste in which you would furnish it. Plumpton is not a rich merchant, but a country gentleman, with a turn for art. He should have carved oak.

Mr. Burley. That's because you carved the wardrobe. Do you want Plumpton to have the history of Joseph in his dining-room? Carved oak may be right enough here at Plumpton Court; I don't say no; but in London, with cabs and omnibuses in hearing, it is out of place.

The Artist. I recommend carved oak, but not such rude work as you have here. In London it should be modern, graceful, and artistic, not Elizabethan and grotesque. I think Mr. Burley is right in objecting to Elizabethan oak in a modern London house, because the house and its contents would be incompatible with each other. Mr. Plumpton should employ the best artist carvers, and have exquisite modern furniture in solid oak left of its natural color.

Mr. Plumpton. Neither stained nor varnished?

The Artist. Neither. It is right to stain and varnish rude work, because that adds richness and hides defects. But the glitter of the varnish and the darkness of the stain are an injury to really delicate work, because they prevent it from being seen. It would be as barbarous to stain and varnish a piece of really fine sculpture in wood, as to paint the Venus de Medici dark brown and give her three coats of copal.

Mr. Plumpton. Well, and about the walls?

The Artist. The best thing with new carved oak is dark green velvet. Have your walls divided in panels with frames of exquisitely carved new oak, and fill these

panels with green velvet. The cornice all round the top should be of carved oak too; and in it you might introduce a series of armorial shields from your pedigree, either carved in the wood and left without color, or else illuminated in gold and color on plain shields, but not both carved and painted.

Mr. Plumpton. Any pictures?

The Artist. Of course. I want the dark green velvet in the panels for the pictures. You ought to have a series of pictures connected with each other by their subjects, and, if possible, painted by the same hand.

Mr. Mantley. Old portraits from here would do very well.

The Artist. No, they would be incongruous. They are better where they are in the old house. Modern portraits, on the other hand, would be hideous. A series of illustrations of some place, if landscapes, or of some poet, if figure subjects, would do better. For example: a set of illustrations of Mr. Plumpton's most picturesque estate, or a series of subjects from Tennyson. I would not have many pictures. Three very large ones would look more majestic than a crowd of little ones. One great picture on each wall is my ideal, and none, of course, near the windows. The dislike to large pictures is very general and quite groundless. People who have plenty of room for large pictures tell you they have no room, with great blank spaces of wall everywhere. For such a dining-room as yours I would have three pictures, twelve feet long each. Your velvet panelling must, of course, be arranged expressly to receive them. The pictures should be warm in color on account of the green walls.

Mr. Plumpton. But the chairs and carpet?

The Artist. The chairs green velvet like the walls, the oak carved richly, yet not so as to interfere with comfort; the carpet ultramarine blue with a broad border of green oak leaves, and the curtains ultramarine velvet, with a border embroidered in green silk.

Mr. Plumpton. Blue and green together! Mrs. Plumpton will never hear of such a violation of good taste.

Mr. Mantley. Where did you ever see such an unnatural combination?

Mr. Burley. You artists sneer at upholsterers; why, any upholsterer knows better than to put two such discordant colors as blue and green together.

The Artist. I am sorry to have irritated you all; but you asked my advice, and I gave it. Shall I go on or not? If I go on, I am sure to offend you. I had better have held my tongue.

Mr. Plumptre. Go on, go on; we want to hear what you have got to say for yourself. We have him now, eh, Mantley? Blue and green together! I wonder how he will reason us into such a strange theory as that!

The Artist. I will answer you one by one. If Mrs. Plumptre dislikes blue and green together, it is merely because her milliner told her to do so, and she, out of pure humility, obeys. But her own feelings are right, because her senses are sound. Only this very morning, as we were looking at the humming-birds in her little room, she particularly called my attention to one, colored exactly on the principle of my carpet, — dark azure, with touches of intense green; and she liked that the best of all of them. In answer to Mr. Mantley's question where did I ever see such an unnatural combination? I may say, everywhere in nature. Green hills and blue sky, green leaves against the intense azure overhead, green shores of lakes and blue water, green transparence and blue reflections on sea waves, green shallows and blue deep water in the sea, blue plumage of birds with green gleaming in it, blue flowers amongst their own green leaves, blue-bells in the green grass, green and blue both at their brightest on the wings of a butterfly, green and blue on a thousand insects, green and blue wedded together by God himself all over this colored world. There, Mr. Mantley, there have I seen what you please to call an unnatural combination! And you, Mr. Burley, how can you possibly think that artists who own no law but that of the Divine example can concern themselves with the dicta of tradesmen, who refer nothing to nature? If you want to color well, either in furniture or

any thing else, go and study color in God's works, not in tailors' fashion books and upholsterers' shop windows.*

Mr. Plumpton. If I put green and blue together, every lady will say I have no taste. They don't believe in nature; they believe in milliners. But now about the drawing-room?

Mr. Mantley. Very delicate and dangerous ground. The drawing-room is a lady's own territory. Mrs. Plumpton may not particularly care to have other influences than hers brought to bear upon you on that question.

Mr. Plumpton. She will be glad of good advice. Let us think the matter over. Pale colors of course.

The Artist. Why so pale? I protest against the pallor of English drawing-rooms. They are all gray and white, and at once chilly and frivolous.

Mr. Plumpton. I may begin by saying that I shall hang my best modern pictures in my town drawing-room.

The Artist. Then have dark colors. They make the splendor of splendid things tell. My ideal of a drawing-room is derived from French *salons*, but mainly with a view to help the effect of works of art. It is a common error to spend money in pictures, and then begrudge the outlay necessary to show them to advantage. Better buy one picture less, and spend the money in velvet and ebony. The walls should be panelled with frames of ebony filled with velvet of a rich violet color. There ought to be magnificent mirrors, let in here and there in place of the velvet; and round the mirrors the ebony should be enriched with the most delicate carving. The chimney-piece

* People who are not artists, and have no confidence in their own judgment about the employment of color in furniture, may overcome the difficulty by a simple obedience to the Divine answers to all artistic questions which exist so profusely in nature. The combinations of color in nature are, on the whole, better than those of our carpet manufacturers and paper stainers. Select a beautiful bird, or butterfly, or plant, — that which pleases you best; take the colors you find in it, and of them compose the coloring of your room. Mind you match the colors exactly (no easy matter); then take care to keep the same proportions as to quantity, and, as nearly as possible, the same relation as to juxtaposition. Thus, by humbly accepting the teaching of nature, you shall color your room well.

should be of pure white marble sculptured by some great sculptor. Against your violet velvet beautiful statues should relieve themselves, and between each pair of statues a noble picture should hang. All round the room, silver candlesticks of exquisite design should spring from the ebony frames of the panels, each a separate invention.

Mr. Plumpton. Very good. And the furniture?

The Artist. It might be either ebony with orange damask, or gilded with violet velvet. In the one case, you would carry the wood work of the walls into the furniture; in the other, the hanging. The carpet might consist of a chequer of alternate lozenges of needle-work, in one of which an orange pattern was presented on a violet ground, and in the other the same pattern heraldically counter-changed to violet upon orange.*

Mr. Mantley. Mrs. Plumpton has too much good taste to cover her drawing-room table with frivolous toys; but many ladies would ruin the effect of such a drawing-room as you suggest, by the introduction of many little frivolities, entirely out of harmony with the sober grandeur of your idea. Your room seems fit for women of high culture, but not for all women. It would be too grave and artistic for many. Light papers, miscellaneous needle-work and toys, and showy ornaments give a general appearance of trifling which is more popular, because more in harmony with tea and small talk. Character, after all, governs furniture, and frivolous people will always furnish frivolously, do what you will.

The Artist. I have no objection to needlework in itself; but ladies often spoil their rooms by the introduction of it, because they are not able to color. The color faculty is very rare in England. But a lady who was really a colorist might find infinite employment for her needle in such a room as I should like. The curtains and carpet and cushions might be all of tapestry done with the needle, but done in obedience to a dominant note of color, given in this

*. In a certain French house, the carpet of the *salon* is formed of needle-work and velvet in broad bands. The velvet is the same as that on the walls; the needlework recalls the prevailing colors of the furniture.

case by the violet velvet of the walls of the room. Toys on the table are intended to help people to something that they can talk about; so they have a certain social use. But they should be exquisite little works of art or relics of antiquity, such as ancient Roman or mediæval jewelry, or Italian goldsmith's work, always possessing either an intellectual or artistic interest, — not mere children's play-things bought at toy-shops.

Mr. Plumpton. We are getting on very slowly. We have the library and bedrooms to do yet.

Mr. Burley. I think you are going very fast. Those two rooms will cost you ten thousand pounds if you carry out all these artistic suggestions. Such doctrines as we have been listening to are not for people of moderate fortune.

The Artist. They are for everybody's house and everybody's pocket. People who cannot afford velvet can afford paper, and good color is obtainable in very humble materials. The artist instinct works in clay and iron as well as in marble and gold. The arch-enemy of art is not poverty, but vulgarity. A poor woman may prove herself a colorist by the wise employment of a few threads of dyed wool; a rich one may proclaim her incompetence in the arrangement of the costliest tissues.

Mr. Mantley. For the library, have intellectual associations. Furnish for the mind. Have busts or pictures of great authors; have objects illustrative of history. The chairs and tables should be comfortable and convenient for study, the book-cases orderly and well arranged. In a modern house I should recommend mahogany for the library, with pomegranate-colored morocco. The carpet a pleasant green, for contrast.

Mr. Burley. Good; we are coming to common sense at last! It was high time we did! Don't forget to have a great writing-table with lots of drawers.

Mr. Plumpton. A good plan for bedrooms is to furnish them according to some dominant color; it gives a name for each. Here we have the amber-room, the crimson-room,

the blue-room, etc. I intend to follow the same plan in town. It is a good old-fashioned country plan.

The Artist. It is also eminently artistic, and might be carried out to the greatest advantage. You will have some difficulty about papers and carpets. You will probably have to get them all made on purpose.

Mr. Plumpton. Very well; you shall have the ordering of the color. Mrs. Plumpton will be glad to have it in such good hands; only you will have to use all your eloquence to reconcile her to your heterodox views.

The Artist. I shall take her to the humming-birds, and deliver a short lecture upon them. If the humming-birds don't win my battle for me, I have two strong armies in reserve,—the butterflies and moths in the museum, and the flowers in the garden and conservatory.

Mr. Mantley. We were talking about the poetry of furniture. English bedrooms are peculiarly deficient in poetry. With rare exceptions, they are only fit for sleeping in. I think a bedroom should be very beautiful. A young lady's bedroom, especially, should be delicate and gay, with all sorts of pretty evidences of the refinement of its occupant.

Mr. Plumpton. In nearly all English bedrooms the bed occupies too large a space, and the use of the room is quite undisguised. That is because we never receive friends in our bedrooms. The unquestionable superiority of French bedrooms is chiefly due to the fact that the French receive their friends there. I sometimes spend a week or two with an old friend of mine in a French château, and my bedroom there is really very pretty. A fine piece of tapestry drawn across the alcove hides the bed during the daytime; and the rest of the room is furnished as a pleasant mixture of the salon and library, all the apparatus for washing being in a bath-room close at hand. In houses where you cannot give a private sitting-room to each guest, I think the bedrooms certainly ought to contain every thing necessary to a man who may wish to spend some hours every day in privacy, and either write or read as he likes.

Mr. Plumpton. We have entirely neglected one little fact about furniture, — the astonishing hold it gains on our affections. I don't know whether you are like me, Mantley; but I could not part with my old furniture without a bitter pang. It seems to me that one of the saddest things about coming to poverty must be to separate one's self from all these dear old silent companions, these dumb sharers and witnesses of our privacy that inhabit our rooms with us. I never could sell my old mother's favorite chairs and tables; and then the bed she died in, how sacred it is, Mantley!

Mr. Mantley. Yes; all the power that wealth and genius give to furniture is nothing to the power of that kind of association. A king's throne may dazzle and overawe us; but the simple chair of a dear friend who is dead moves us far more deeply. We get so attached to some pieces of furniture that they become to us as if endowed with a kind of affection themselves, and we half believe not only that we love them, but that they love us. We should not like to sell them to people for whom they were only pieces of wood, not friends.



XIX.

THE ARTISTIC SPIRIT.

THE following slight notes on a very deep and subtle subject have no pretension to exhaust it, or even to get quite to the bottom of it. Just after writing them I perceive already that more things might have been said, and even these few things better said. Still, such observations as these, though somewhat baldly set down, may have a certain utility in times when there is more external interest in art than inward sympathy with the spirit of it. If once the spirit of art were fully entered into, a true understanding of it would ultimately follow; but the erudition of criticism is in vain, if we have not that inward sympathy. How rare this is I hardly like to say positively, for it may be more frequent amongst unknown lovers of art than I know of, or at present imagine. But amongst known writers it is indeed very rare. Robert Browning thoroughly enters into the artistic mind, and sees it from the inside; but no other English poet ever did that. And of prose writers Thackeray understood artists. These two are on the inside; Scott, Byron, Wordsworth, and their predecessors, on the outside only.

1. *As to Aristocracy.*—The spirit of aristocracy would seem to have this in common with art, that it loves refinement and grace. The fine art of an aristocracy is its good behavior; and the perfect aristocrat, with his grand air and fine manner, has always been a favorite with the best figure painters. But to conclude that between art and aristocracy there is any thing more than an occasional sympathy would be erroneous. Art is not necessary to an aristocracy, as such, the only arts which really serve it being family portraiture and the degree of architecture,

scarcely deserving the name of a fine art, which suffices to distinguish the house of the great land-owner. There is true and intimate sympathy between aristocracies and established military and ecclesiastical hierarchies, true and intimate antipathy between aristocracies, and dissent in politics and religion; but between the spirit of art and the spirit of aristocracy there is coolness, and that coolness neither writing nor lecturing is likely to overcome.

But then, on the other hand, art is not particularly democratic. Artists, if they find little to appeal to in the richest class, find still less in those poorer classes whose entire energy is absorbed in the struggle for daily bread. It is true that the French republicans have usually, even in the midst of the utmost national excitement, found leisure to care for the protection and encouragement of art; but this is less a republican than a national sentiment. It is an accepted creed in the minds of all Frenchmen that their country has conquered, and must maintain, the first place in two things — war and art; nor could any popular government altogether refuse to employ artists and keep up picture galleries. Even Louis Phillippe, who shared and represented the bourgeois feeling, spent money on pictures for Versailles, though these were generally bad ones; and the present Emperor cherishes art as much as his predecessors did.

Yet, though art be neither aristocratic nor democratic, it is worthy of remark that whenever the artistic spirit develops itself, it effaces, between the persons possessing it, the distinctions of rank. A man of rank, endowed with artistic perceptions, is drawn towards all true artists by a feeling of confraternity. It has been observed even of photography, that it affords a common ground on which men of all classes fraternize. This is still more true of painting, probably because painting cultivates the feelings so much more, and therefore awakens subtler sympathies. Much has been written by Thackeray and other novelists about the narrow contempt with which society regards art and artists. The truth is that so long as people of station are ignorant of art, they do undoubtedly hold its professors

in slight esteem, because the Fine Arts can only influence by sympathy, never by force. But on the other hand, it is equally true that when rich men are endowed with the faculties which apprehend art, they always respect good artists, and show that they value their friendship.

2. *As to the Bourgeois Spirit.*—The state of mind in which our middle classes and the French bourgeois live, is unfavorable to art in many ways. Competence and comfort and cleanliness are very good and pleasant and desirable, and it is wonderful with how little money a managing couple in the middle classes will procure those blessings; but when they are made the only aims of life, they bring on an incredible pettiness of soul. I never met with any thoroughly bourgeois mind which had the least understanding of art. If, for example, a mayor and common council, composed of this class of people, have to deliberate about the destruction of some grand relic of the middle ages, you may *perhaps* find some one man amongst them who is superior enough to think that the object ought to be preserved for its historical or antiquarian interest, but you would not be likely to find any one to suggest its preservation on purely artistic grounds; and if you tried to explain its artistic value to such people, you would waste your explanation. The cardinal bourgeois virtues of tidiness and decency and order, are always likely to be offended by the grandeur of the high artistic spirit. For example, a mutilated antique is not exactly what the bourgeois mind would care to have in its parlor.

Much of the Bohemianism we find amongst artists is due to their instinctive revolt from middle-class narrowness. The artists lose a great deal, no doubt, by yielding so far to this repulsion, because there are virtues conspicuous in the middle class which all men ought to strive for, and which, when faithfully practised, add very greatly to human happiness in every condition of life. The bourgeois often has his revenge and triumph in the ruin and wretchedness consequent on the careless, irregular ways of Bohemianism; but the narrow prudence which hates ideas, scorns beauty, and regulates every thing with reference to

the lowest standard of utility, is quite incompatible with artistic achievement; and not only that, but it even incapacitates men for comprehending such achievement.

3. *As to Religion.*—The Fine Arts illustrate religion willingly, because it affords good subjects, and there is nothing in the artistic spirit in any way incompatible with the purest spirit of devotion; indeed, art draws us continually towards a state of mind akin to the devotional, by requiring us to spend our time in the conscious contemplation of the work of the Supreme Artist. Still, it is quite certain that there exists an opposition between art, which takes *pleasure* in God's work, and all those various forms of religious fanaticism which condemn pleasure as sinful. The healthiest temper of art is to rejoice in the sight of all visible beauty, fully, heartily, and exquisitely; the temper of religious fanaticism is to turn away from all earthly loveliness, and to mortify the desire of the eyes. Roman Catholic piety appears to find a certain utility in art, for it buys much; but it seems to like bad art just as well as good, and even to have a decided taste for certain kinds of foppery—as in the curling of saints' hair; or tawdriness—as in the tinsel on their garments—which true art disdains. Our own most earnest Protestants care very little for art; if they buy an engraving now and then, it is not for any artistic quality, but for the subject, as connected with their faith; or if it be secular, for its interest as a portraiture of some great man they admire,—some Cromwell, or Wellington, or Havelock. The reason seems to be that religious enthusiasm is always so ready to be kindled, so ready to illuminate and exalt every thing it loves with its own internal light, that it does not care whether the work of art be good if it only have the religious spirit, or some plausible manufactured imitation of it; and it is surprising what a very poor mockery of it suffices. The customs of society in matters of outward observance, to which so many sceptics find it expedient to conform, make it difficult to ascertain with precision, what are or have been the real convictions of great artists, but amongst recent ones we may note that Haydon was an extremely

religious man, who prayed almost literally without ceasing, whilst Turner was a sceptic. Thomas Seddon, on the other hand, was eminently pious, at least during his labors in the East, but then the artistic spirit is just what is absent from his works. Love of the sacred ground, reverence for the fact, earnestness, patient industry, keenness of sight, delicate skill of hand, all these he had, and exercised most conscientiously, most bravely, but the spirit of *art* he had *not*. Of living men it is better not to speak; it is useless to mention those who are religious without naming others who are not, and it would be wrong to expose these latter to public odium on account of opinions which can only be known privately, and which in no wise injuriously affect their pictures.

4. *As to Morality.*—The general opinion about the morality of figure painters is this: Common sense argues that it is not probable that men can pass a great portion of their time in the study of the female form, without undergoing temptations which human nature is seldom insensible enough, or resolute enough, to resist. It may, however, be observed, without claiming immaculate purity of life for all these artists, that the naked figure loses, when seen habitually, and for purposes of serious study, much of that disturbing influence over the senses which a beautiful woman, unclothed, would, in other circumstances, generally exercise. And it is only fair to say that artists, as a class, are not more immoral than other men. Young officers, young attorneys, young cotton manufacturers, have, as a general rule, little right to reproach young painters with licentiousness.

But it is not so much with morality of life that we are here concerned, as with the morality of the artistic spirit itself. The truth is that art, as such, has nothing to do with either morality or immorality; it illustrates both with equal artistic satisfaction, provided that the quality of the material be to its mind. The leaning towards sensual subjects evinced by Gérôme, for instance, is, we are convinced, due far more to artistic predilections for certain qualities of line and modelling, best found in such

subjects, than to prurience of feeling. When the artistic spirit is powerful, and has predilections of this kind, it is apt to over-rule all other considerations. The spectator, who does not share this spirit, sees immorality where none was intended, and, as he sees nothing else, imagines that the work was produced only for immoral purposes. On the other hand, the artist, who was aiming at some purely artistic triumph, some masterly feat of drawing and arrangement of forms, and who selected the immoral subject because it so precisely furnished the excuse for, and called for the display of, those subtleties of his craft, thinks no more about the immoral conduct of his figures than a girl thinks of the sexual behavior of the flowers she gathers in her garden. There have been examples, no doubt, of artists endowed with the true faculty, who had, notwithstanding, religious convictions powerful enough to enable them to withstand these artistic temptations, but such men are rare, and they are not the greatest painters. It is the nature of art to give to artistic considerations such importance that they gradually come to outweigh all others. I remember taking part in a discussion in a French *atelier*, as to the merits of a certain modern picture. The subject was most immoral, but the work had valuable artistic qualities, and it was on these qualities alone that the discussion turned. The disputants were insensible to the *apparent* subject, which, as they all knew, was only a pretext; their entire attention was occupied by the more or less successful artistic achievement which was the real purpose of the painter.

5. *As to the Military Spirit.* — Artists like soldiers, as they like priests, for their costume and action. But the military and ecclesiastical costumes have both grievously declined in artistic interest since the middle ages. Golden cope and jewelled mitre were nobler to look upon than wig and lawn sleeves, armor of steel inlaid with silver and gold was better worth painting than padded coatee or strapped pantaloons. Horace Vernet loved modern military tailoring, however, and knew the craft down to every braid and button. But are the pictures of Vernet

due to the artistic or the military spirit? Is he not rather a soldier using paint for military purposes, than a painter using soldiers for artistic ends? He had a wonderful memory, but of the kind which distinguishes good generals; he remembered men, and uniforms, and military combinations. He drew very cleverly, and colored brightly and plausibly; yet who goes to Vernet's works for their artistic qualities?

When greater artists have painted battles it has usually been either for the action of the naked figure, to display which they purposely stripped the combatants, or for the costume of some more picturesque time or nation; not from any definitely military spirit. A good many artists, too, have painted battles from a love of horror and slaughter, which it would be grievous injustice to all noble soldiers to call *their* spirit. A high-minded soldier walks through blood whither duty commands him, but he does not wallow in it.

6. *As to the Commercial Spirit.*—What first strikes us here is the obvious reflection that commerce is the best and kindest helper and friend of the Fine Arts, and yet that the spirit of commerce is directly opposed to the spirit of art.

In recognizing this opposition we by no means intend to detract from the utility of the commercial spirit, or to imply any wish to substitute for it the artistic feeling generally. It is the object of commerce to increase wealth, and the result of the general spread of the commercial spirit in a country is the augmentation of the national power and resources. If it were to become the general custom of all persons having capital enough to afford them perfect leisure, to devote their whole time to the study of the Fine Arts, not only would the country become so enfeebled both in money and population as to be incapable of maintaining its independence, but even the Fine Arts themselves would be ruined by the diminution of that wealth, a great abundance of which is absolutely necessary to their support.

Men of business, whose primary object is gain, have usually some difficulty in appreciating the truest artists,

with whom gain is the secondary and art the first object. Either they look upon the Fine Arts as a trade, or else, perceiving that artists are often indifferent to their pecuniary interests, they consider them foolish children, who cannot discern what is best to be done. No doubt a commercial man who sets aside his pecuniary interest for an idea, disobeys and sets aside, in so doing the commercial principle. Some tradesmen do this knowingly from time to time, as for instance, it now and then happens that a publisher issues a book by which he is aware that he is likely to be a loser, merely because he thinks that the work ought not to be stifled. Or, again, a manufacturer occasionally tries a new invention less in the hope that it will pay than from a desire to give ingenuity a fair chance. Men who do these things often render great services to humanity, but they are not likely to get much reputation for wisdom in any society which recognizes profit as the measure of intelligence.

Now the true artist outrages the commercial spirit habitually. To begin with, his choice of art at all as a means of living is in itself contrary to the commercial principle, because art is as a profession, too precarious to be embraced by any one not prepared to endure poverty contentedly, and contentment with poverty is an idea foreign to the commercial mind, which is accustomed to consider it as the proof of incapacity. In nine cases out of ten art is a bad investment of ability, and people who make bad investments seldom enjoy high credit for practical sense. But not only in the selection of his profession does an artist outrage the commercial spirit, he often outrages it still more in the way he follows his art. Instead of carefully studying the market and providing what the public best likes, original artists are apt to make themselves martyrs to their artistic predilections. A successful tradesman said to me one day, "In business we provide what sells best; that is our affair. Whether a pattern is artistic or not does not concern us; we encourage bad art if our customers prefer it; and the shopkeeper who proceeds on any other principle is pretty sure to ruin himself." When

you buy a carpet or a wall paper and the shopman tells you that the design is beautiful, what he means is that it is in fashion; and a thing gets into fashion as soon as everybody thinks everybody else approves of it. The temper of a real artist is not this shopman's pliant mood; it is more like the temper of William Wordsworth. He offers what he believes to be the worthiest thing that he is capable of doing, whether anybody likes it or not; and he will not condescend to offer any thing less worthy because the people like it better. This Wordsworthian condition of mind looks self-opinionated, conceited; would it not be more graceful to yield the point, conform to precedent, defer to the general opinion? And artists, so far as they approach to this state, are liable to be accused of vanity, which is the only explanation that the world can find for such strange, unaccountable ways.

A better explanation, however, does not seem unattainable. Original men appear to be endowed with an almost ungovernable desire to find an outlet for their originality; and it would be as well if, instead of setting down originality as folly, we were to give Heaven credit for understanding the best interests of humanity when it accompanied every good gift with the condition that the possessor should be uneasy till he had set it forth. All artists, poets, inventors, thinkers, are compelled to set forth their gifts. And this is the condition of genuineness in art work. Original art is not only the best, it is the only art which has any interest. The simple expression of a real gift, however humble, is better than the most learned imitation of other men's labor. Nor is it vanity which makes men try to express lesser talents; vanity would rather suggest the more ambitious notion of rivalling great men on their own ground. William Hunt, not being a vain man, became what we all know; had nature added vanity to his composition he would never have painted such simple subjects. His life was a bright triumph of that combination of humility with self-reliance which distinguishes the true artist.

It follows that since a painter cannot without danger, pay much attention to the question of profit, he is obliged,

if he would be happy, to learn the philosophy preached by so many ancient sages, and enforced by the authority of no less a teacher than the Head of Christianity, that poverty has its own blessings and compensations, and that it is, in some important respects, a better condition than wealth. This philosophy, wild as it may seem to the worldly, has an immense attraction for noble minds. The more so that it allows of a more cheerful view of human life generally. If happiness is attainable by the poor, we may hope that a good many more or less completely attain to it. But if on the other hand happiness cannot possibly be procured for less than two thousand pounds a year, many human beings are for ever debarred from it. It seems so glorious for a human being to bear bravely the suffering and contempt which poverty brings, so enviable to have found the secret of an inward happiness strong enough to dwell serenely in the midst of privation, that heroic spirits are one and all in love with this lofty creed. A true artist will eat bread and drink water for his art; and this temper, able to be happy almost without money, often makes him careless of it when it comes; if he gets any he is apt to be foolishly generous with it, especially to brother artists who are in want. This characteristic of artists tends, however, to diminish as their place in general society is better recognized. Living more in the world than they used to do and less in solitude or in Bohemia, they are learning a new virtue and a new vice — provident habits and polite selfishness. And as the Philistines only practise Christianity so far as it is consistent with a very high degree of physical comfort, the artist who, having two coats, was always ready to give one of them, if not *both*, to his less fortunate brother, is now to be sought rather in the taverns of disreputable Bohemia than in the pillared streets of the West End.

7. *As to the Industrial Spirit.* — The industrial principle is to find out, first, how to make a thing, and then to produce that identical thing in the utmost possible quantities and at the lowest possible rate for ever and ever.

The artistic principle is that when once a thing has been perfectly well done, there is little or no use in trying to do it again. If, for instance, a water-color painter felt inclined to paint birds' nests, he would very likely be deterred from attempting them by the reflection that Hunt had done them so well. An industrial mind would endeavor to find out means of producing unlimited copies of Hunt's nests in color.

This is one reason the more why good artists are almost always new. If a man has the artistic spirit he will either seek unused material in nature, or if he appears to accept the old material he will make it new by finding unthought of elements and suggestions in it.

Artists, however, occasionally share the industrial spirit to a certain extent; but when they do, it degrades them exactly in proportion to its degree. It would be easy to mention painters, who, to save time and earn money, have got more or less into habits of manufacture, producing many works which are in reality only modifications of one. This gives great apparent manual facility, because such works are, in consequence of their frequent repetition, produced with great certainty, whereas in art of a higher order every new work is an untried and somewhat hazardous experiment.

Of course the industrial principle is right in industrial business, where indeed it is the only safe or possible principle. Nothing can be more remote from my intention than to express any thing but the most respectful admiration for the wise maxims which commerce and industry must ever apply if they would prosper. The magnificent results achieved by faithful obedience to these principles prove that they are sound and in harmony with natural law. All I say is, that commercial and industrial wisdom is not applicable to the Fine Arts, nor can the Fine Arts be either effectively advanced or heartily enjoyed by a people which has *only* that wisdom.

In the ways of labor in an artist's life, violations of industrial principles are frequent. Good artists are always laborious, but they are seldom steadily and regularly la-

borious. "When you begin to tire of your work," said Leslie, "leave off; otherwise you will probably injure it. You will certainly injure yourself." Leslie was quite right in speaking so to young artists; but only fancy a cotton manufacturer saying to his hands, "When you begin to tire of your work, leave off!" The hard industrial law requires the steadiness of a steam-engine from its servants; but then it only requires the *same sort of work* that steam-engines may do — incessant repetition of identically similar acts. The exigencies of Fine Art are far heavier, not merely because it requires to some extent the use of the mind, but still more because it demands the unflagging expenditure of *feeling*; and the feelings, more than any other of our faculties, are subject to sudden and unaccountable exhaustion. Fine Art work is useless unless you are in the vein, and neither picture nor poem can go on with the unrelaxing steadiness displayed in the weaving of a piece of cotton cloth. But a prudent artist, knowing this, will contrive to have easier artistic work at hand for his more torpid hours. If he cannot paint passionately to-day, he may yet be able to study accurately, and the picture may be laid aside for some careful drawing done from nature for information alone. The wise rule is never to force yourself to work you are momentarily unfit for, only do *something*, if it be but to make a note in your memorandum book.

8. *As to the Intellectual Spirit.* — It is a tendency of the present age to exalt the intellectual at the expense of the perceptive and imaginative faculties. For example, if, in speaking of artists, I happen to say that A. was intellectual and B. not, nine readers out of ten would conclude that I was praising A. and putting B. down; whereas I might say that with perfect truth and all the time reverence B. as a man of the rarest order of soul, whilst I considered A. no better than a good many of us. An attorney is generally more intellectual than a saint, an average artillery officer is likely to be more intellectual than Garibaldi, any tolerably good critic may be more intellectual than the immortal colorists. The art of painting does not proceed so

much by intelligence as by sight, and feeling, and invention. Painters are often curiously feeble in their reasonings about art, and the best painters are commonly the worst reasoners. Not that their theories of art are without value; on the contrary, no art theories are so valuable as theirs if only we translate them into more philosophical language, which may be easily done by taking into account their special points of view. The unfeigned contempt which almost all artists feel for critics—even for the best of them—is partly explicable by the fact that the artistic spirit can neither appreciate nor follow intellectual methods.

The elevation of *scholarship*, or quantity of traditional acquisition, above *faculty* or mental flexibility and force, which has always hitherto been prevalent in society, is one of those inevitable pieces of injustice which it is useless to combat directly, but which, we may reasonably hope, will yield in due time to the gradual influences of culture. The more serious attention given in these days to the Fine Arts, and the fact that pedantry is now considered bad taste, are hopeful indications. True art, which requires free and healthy faculties, is opposed to pedantry, which crushes the soul under a burden.

9. *The Principle of Art for Art.*—A pernicious principle in one way, that it tends to deprive painting of much of its influence over the public by directing its efforts to aims in which the public cannot possibly take any interest, and yet a principle which has always had great weight with artists, which regulates the admission of pictures to exhibitions, and has more influence than any other consideration in determining the rank which an artist's name must ultimately hold in the catalogue of masters. Here is a recent example. Many readers will remember a picture by Mr. Whistler, called "The Woman in White." The work was unpleasant, and, to those who did not see the technical problem which it attempted to solve, most uninteresting; nevertheless it did Mr. Whistler's name good amongst persons conversant with art, because it proved, on his part, at least an intelligent interest in his profession. The difficulty he proposed to wrestle with was that of

relieving white upon white; there was some presumption in the essay, but it is quite in the artistic spirit to make such attempts. The difficulty of painting white-objects may be to some extent understood by the unprofessional reader in this way. Nature always lets us see that a white object is white, even when, from its situation, it is darker than some colored objects. Nature can paint *dark whites*; but when painters try to paint dark whites, they generally end by producing light grays, or dirty, pale, yellowish browns. The difficulty is to paint a dark color which shall obviously stand for white *and look perfectly pure*; and this difficulty is quite infinite, because to find one tint is not enough. Nature has not only one dark white, she has millions of various hues, produced by reflected color, which all in their own place, and under their own peculiar conditions, stand for white.

It will often be found that pictures by good painters which seem to have no subject worth representing, are serious endeavors to master some peculiar artistic difficulty; and, when successful, these solutions of technical problems are often highly valuable and interesting in a certain sense. The Lorraine's great problem evidently was to produce something which, by careful management, might be made to look rather like the sun; and it is generally understood that he resolved that problem so far as its immense difficulty admits of a solution. The great interest of painting as a practical pursuit is, that its difficulties are so infinite, that every new artist may find some untried one to grapple with, and reasonably indulge the hope that, if he succeeds, that conquest will give him a place in the history of art development. No age has been more fertile in triumphs of this kind than our own, and there is no surer sign of the vigor of a school than the healthy disposition to seek for new conquests. So long as painters are content to do what has only been done before, they *always* do less than their predecessors.

And this principle, of art for art, makes all things which deserve to be painted interesting; the question is less whether the thing is of the rarest and noblest order of

beauty than what we can make of it. For instance, in landscape the grand and rare effects are, considered as natural effects, by far the most interesting ; but looking at nature with strict reference to art, it must be admitted that the problem of the right management of a few delicate grays in some simple every-day effect, is quite as deep and curious. I know a very intelligent amateur who has devoted years to the study of common sunshine. Indeed, it may safely be asserted that any artist or critic who has mastered the facts of appearance in any common object under common effects, knows much.

Many painters, from an insufficient apprehension of the importance of merely artistic qualities, have deceived themselves in the hope that by painting more learned and thoughtful pictures, or pictures of rarer and more wonderful subjects, or pictures of more accurate veracity than their contemporaries, they might thereby achieve high artistic rank. For example, we find many historical painters, especially in Germany, who are thoughtful and philosophical to such a degree, that they lose the healthy sensuous relish for beautiful color and fair form which is absolutely indispensable to a good painter ; and we have landscape painters, of whom the well-known traveller, Mr. Atkinson, is an instance, who endeavor to acquire artistic renown by seeking some remote ground hitherto unoccupied ; and we have young artists who spare no pains to secure veracity. Now all these things are good things, and there lies the danger, for if they were evidently valueless no sensible man would aim at them. Thought is good, novelty is good, veracity is good ; but, alas ! they cannot of themselves produce *art*. I could easily name fine pictures, priceless treasures, in which there is no thought, in which there never was any novelty, and whose veracity, both as to facts of history and facts of science, is so unreliable, that any well-informed critic could point out falsities and impossibilities by the dozen. Why, then, are such works treasures ? Because, with all their faults, they have *quality*. The men who painted them may not have been either thinkers, or travellers, or historians, or men of science, but

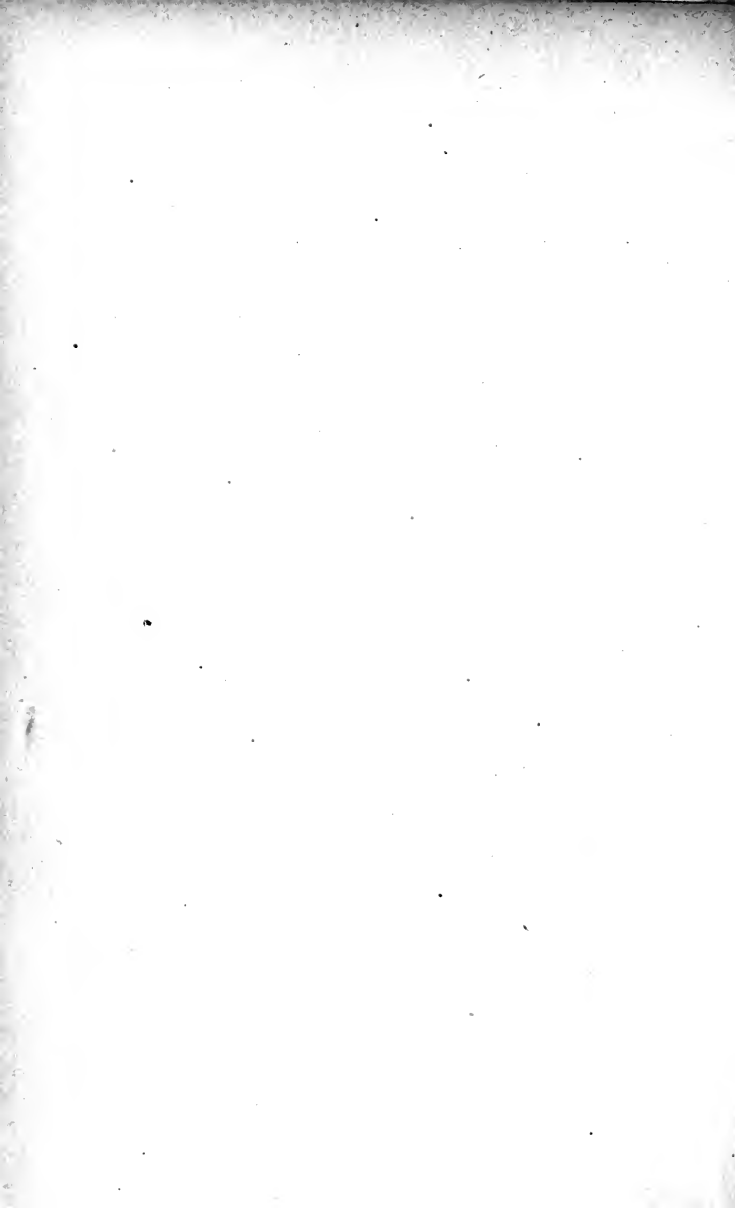
they were *artists*. You or I may know more, think more, observe more, but somehow, with all our efforts, we cannot paint so.

The world, notwithstanding its ignorance of art, sees this better than some critics and connoisseurs do, but, seeing it, draws conclusions of its own. The world sees that painting is a pursuit in which thought, scholarship, information, go for little; whereas a strange, unaccountable talent, working in obscure ways (a special talent as it seems to outsiders, though in reality it results from a high harmony of physical and mental endowments), achieves the only results worth having. And the world wisely hesitates before entering the arena of art. Here is a field in which neither birth nor condition are of any use, and wealth itself of exceedingly little; here faculty alone avails, and a kind of faculty so subtle and peculiar, so difficult to estimate before years have been spent in developing it, or wasted in the vain attempt to develop it where it does not exist, that men having already any solid advantages in life may well pause before they stake them on such a hazard.

It remains only to consider whether, in a national sense, it is wise to assist in the spread of the artistic spirit. The general opinion has concluded that it *is*. Our schools of design, our art exhibitions, the great quantity of our printed art criticism, all urge the country towards an art epoch, which promises ultimately to be brilliant, for we have both the wealth and the talent necessary for such a time. But it may be doubted whether the national mind has turned to art from the pure love for it. We discovered that for want of artistic counsel and help, we were spending our money badly every time we tried either to build a public building or weave a carpet, or color a ribbon. We found out that the French managed these things better, and with less outlay got handsomer results, and it appeared that this superiority was due to their artistic education. So we said, let us study Raphael that we may sell ribbons. This was not a very promising temper to start with; we were laughed at for our awkwardness, and we did not like to be laughed at; so we resolved to silence derision by the acqui-

sition of art skill. Nevertheless, in spite of the commercial spirit of this beginning, we are generally tending art-wards, and the problem before us is whether this artistic infusion will not injuriously affect the traditional character of Englishmen. It will modify it very considerably, rely upon that. There is a difference between minds which are artistic and minds which are not, so strong and decided, that nobody can question the influence of art upon character. Not that art always influences in the same way; various itself, it produces varied effects. But it always alters our habitual estimates of things and men; it alters our ways of valuing things. A child in a library values those books most which have gilt edges; a book collector prizes the rarest editions; but a lover of reading for its own sake neither cares for gilt edges nor rare editions, only for the excellence of the matter and the accuracy of the text. So is our value for men and nature affected by the artistic spirit. To it, vulgar show is the gilt-edged book; the extraordinary is the rare edition, what it values is often very humble and poor to eyes that cannot read it. It can see majesty and dignity in many a poor laborer; it can detect meanness under the mantle of an emperor; it can recognize grandeur in a narrow house, and pettiness in the palace of a thousand chambers.





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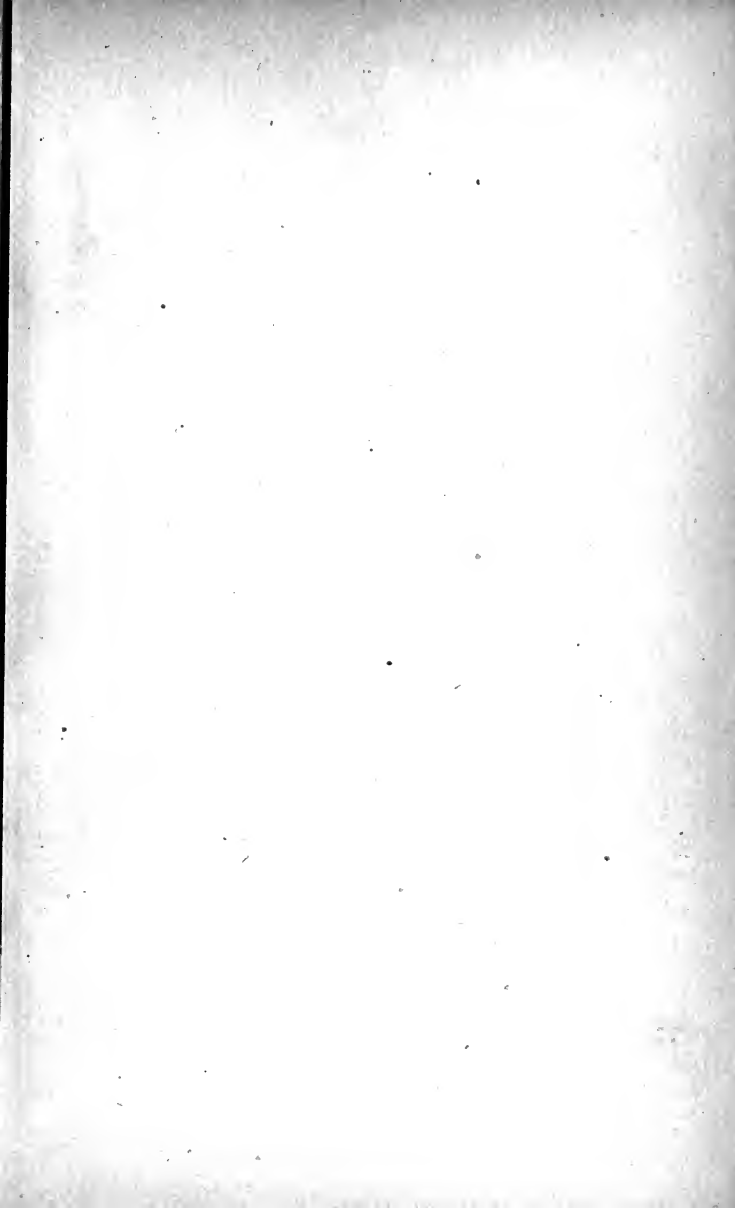
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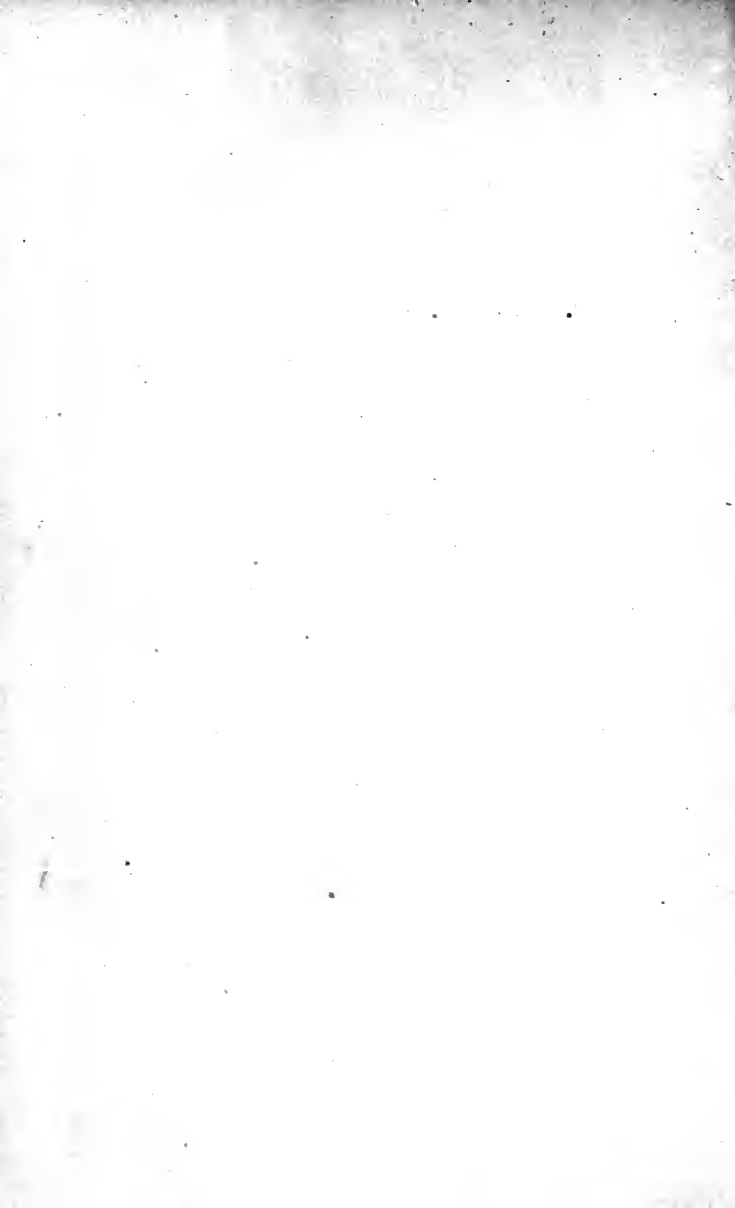
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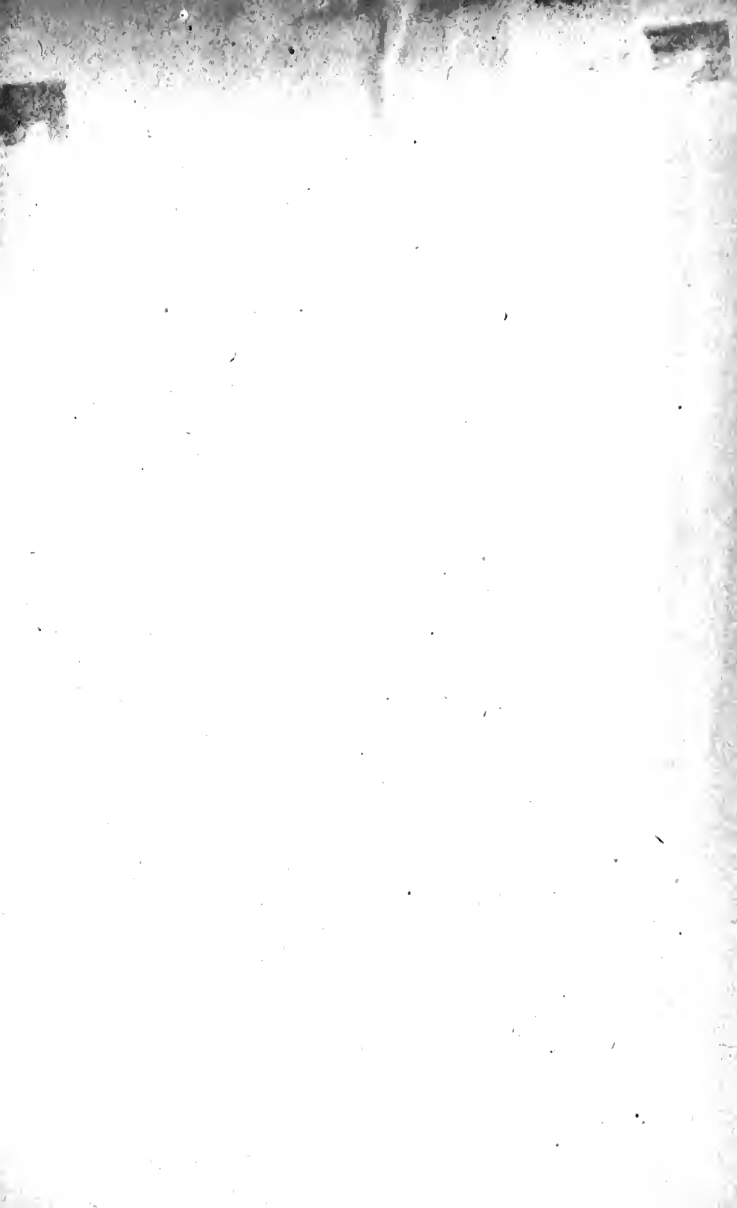
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